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Multi-ethnic Ethiopia

Why and How the Federal State of Ethiopia Persists Until Now

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To my mother and my father who have always supported me

And to my Ethiopian friends who made me be part of their cultures

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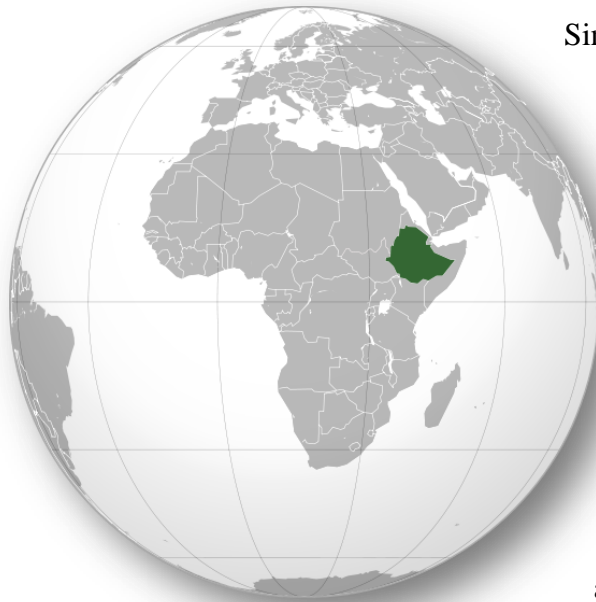
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Preface

Ethiopia – with 80 million inhabitants second in the size of its population after Nigeria on the African continent – is one of the oldest states of Sub-Saharan Africa. Why did I choose this topic? My interest for the country, its culture, and its peoples arose some thousand kilometres away from Vienna, and even more from Ethiopia, when I spent a year in Rovaniemi – Lapland – Finland where I was living together with an Ethiopian girl. In total there were about fifteen Ethiopians living and studying close to the polar circle and I was in the middle of their little multi-ethnic Ethiopian community.



Since these 15 persons were representing at least three or four different ethnic affiliations, I became even more interested in how the State of Ethiopia arose and how its political system has persisted until today. Ethiopia is home to more than 80 nations, each of them with its own language and culture, different in size and appearance as well as social and economic status.

Its constitution is unique in Africa and quite special in the world, giving to each of these nations the right to self-determination up to succession. As a matter of fact, I became even more interested in the country and its political system, asking myself the question why and how Ethiopia could persist until now.

After coming back from Finland I decided to make an internship at *Menschen für Menschen*, an NGO, founded by Karl-Heinz Böhm some 30 years ago, which is doing development assistance exclusively for Ethiopia. My obvious interest in the country and its cultures made me choose the topic for my paper on multi-ethnic Ethiopia. With my thesis I hope to give a clear and objective picture of the country, its peoples, future challenges and perspectives.

1. Introduction

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is located at the Horn of Africa, surrounded by Sudan to the West, Eritrea to the North, Djibouti and Somalia to the East and Kenya to the South. Its total population fluctuate between 73.000.000 and

80.000.000 inhabitants.

Ethiopia has been an independent state since ancient times. It is the only African state which has never been colonised irrespective of the Italian occupation from 1939-1943. The multi-ethnic state is home to more than eighty different ethnic groups.



“Ethiopia retains a strong sense of its own identity, a pervasive awareness of its history and an enormous pride in being the only indigenous African state to retain its independence through the period of the colonial scramble.” (Clapham, 2006: 17) Unlike other states at the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia has never come close to collapse and can therefore be regarded as a strong state rather than a weak one. (Clapham, 2006: 17)

But, if functionality is to be measured not by its existence as a state but by its capacity to secure peace, welfare and loyalty of its people, Ethiopia lacks the mentioned strength. The state is characterised by perseverative and continuing famines, just as showed now in the summer of 2011, and by its low position in the global ranking of per capita income which is reflected in its extreme poorness and inability to provide even the most basic necessities for its people. Further, Ethiopia was riven by warfare for much of the twentieth century and is the first African state in this timeframe being forced to acknowledge the secession of a part of its territory with the independence of Eritrea in

1993. It has never maintained a democratic political system, in the sense of permitting free and fair competition between different political actors. (Clapham, 2006: 17f)

From a human rights perspective Ethiopia's sovereignty did not guarantee a better situation for its citizens than any other colonized neighbour state. Up to 1974, Ethiopia had been an autocratically governed empire where most of the people lived a daily struggle for survival and saw their elementary economic and social rights denied. Culturally, most population groups in the ethnically diverse state were neither able to develop their own cultural identity nor to take part in state administration. This situation did not change under the military regime, which came into power in 1974, even though the regime gave attention to the problem of ethnic discrimination, at least rhetorically. (Brems/Van der Beken, 2008: 1)

The structure of the state faces an increasing challenge inter alia through the introduction of a constitution which acknowledges, uniquely in Africa, the right of each of its constituent "nations, nationalities and peoples" to secede from the greater state of Ethiopia and form separate states of their own. (Clapham, 2006: 17f)

Nowadays designated a federal parliamentary republic, Ethiopia was former named the Empire of Ethiopia until the deposition of its last emperor, Haile Selassie in 1974. The cultures of the northern highlands, especially the Amhara, have taken on a historically grown hegemonic role from the thirteenth century onwards. The dominant culture was characterised by Orthodox Christianity, the Amharic language, a distinctive way to dress and typical food which claimed not so much to be "Amhara" but simply Ethiopian. Amhara and others readily intermarried over generations with the conclusion that anyone who adapted to the lifestyle of the dominant group could rise to the highest position on both the political and economic level. Muslims on the other side were seen as outsiders, whereas Somalis, Afars, and other peoples of the Muslim lowlands were treated as enemies of the state. (Clapham, 2006: 19)

From the later nineteenth century on, Ethiopia accelerated a rapid expansion of its territory through its powerful military force, with the aim to conquer huge areas in the south and west. As a result, numerous subordinate and potentially dissident peoples were

incorporated in the greater state of Ethiopia. On the other hand, the northernmost area, inhabited mainly by Tigrinya, was divided in 1890 when the Italian colony of Eritrea was formed. This political situation provided the launching pad for the Italian invasions of Ethiopia in 1895-96 and 1935-36. The fact that Ethiopia was never colonised by Europeans brings up the question whether the state and its development suffered or benefited as a result of not being colonised. Many Ethiopians believe that the exceptionally low level of economic development and its retention of a political structure are a high price to pay for the persistence of an Ethiopian state defeating colonialism. (Clapham, 2006: 19f)

In 1991, the new government established a multi-ethnic federation which provides the right to secession for each “nation, nationality and people”. The secession clause itself was incorporated in the new constitution for reasons of ideology of the elected government and political necessity to hold up the state of Ethiopia as it was. The Ethiopian federation consists of largely ethnic-based territorial units, and at the same time encourages parties to organize along ethnic lines. Alem Habtu sees the establishment of a liberal democratic constitution as being in contrast to the reality of authoritarian centralist practice which therefore jeopardizes the future of Ethiopian Federalism. (2005: 313)

The present thesis is basically structured in two main parts. First, there is a methodological and theoretical part, where I examine my chosen methodological approach, working in the field of comparative politics, using hermeneutics as the leading concept to work on the used sources and literature and explain the main concepts and theories, which I will later on deal with, and which are fundamental to answer my research questions and hypotheses.

Second, I will go into the case study of Ethiopia, whereas first, I will give a short country profile and secondly analyse the history, especially referring to the different political phases and systems of the country. Moreover, I will describe the legal background and the cornerstones of Ethiopia’s Constitution of 1994, which are central to

understand the political status quo and to answer my research questions. Furthermore, a chapter about Ethiopia's election 2010, its outcomes and challenges has been inserted.

In the last main chapter I am going to analyse the state of Ethiopia in the region from a perspective of the balance of power, as the country is surrounded by dysfunctional or conflicting states. The conclusion at the end of this thesis gives an overview of the work and the main outputs, tries to answer the guiding research questions, and evaluate the hypotheses.

2. Methodological Approach

This thesis lies within the scientific field of comparative politics, which is one of the main research fields of political science. Theories are generated through the comparison of political institutions, structures, processes, and policy outputs. It is another term for the comparative analysis of political systems. Four fields of comparative research can be given:

- ▶ **Objective:** between those elements which are compared to each other like states or nations, whereas political systems are understood as macro elements and particular institutions as micro elements.
- ▶ **Numerical:** between the amount of cases to be compared; e.g. binary country studies.
- ▶ **Methodological:** regarding the method after which the cases are compared: qualitative or quantitative and accordingly the comparative method.
- ▶ **Regarding the sources:** the data which are used for the comparison.

During a comparative research two or more of those items can be intermixed with each other. (Nohlen/Schultze, 2005: 110)

My work mainly focuses on the objective research field, since I analyse the political structure of the state with its federal government and the subordinate constituent units. Throughout this paper I compare Ethiopia with other states when adequate but especially with (neighbour) African countries, when it comes to the topic of European Colonialism, African statehood and nationalism. Further the theoretical part opens up for drawing some comparisons, most notably in the chapters of ethnicity and federalism, between different countries and their political systems.

By using the concept of hermeneutics, I study the literature available which is relevant for my topic, trying to generate a certain understanding and meaning out of it. Hermeneutics is the art of interpreting and achieving an understanding of texts, utterances, etc. Even though it has its roots in a legal and theological methodology, governing the application of civil law, canon law, and the interpretation of scripture, it

developed into a general theory of human understanding. The comprehension of any written text - from a literary to a law text - requires hermeneutics. Hermeneutics recognizes the historical part of human understanding. Ideas in general are nested in historical, linguistic, and cultural horizons of meaning. Taking history into consideration, hermeneutics seeks to understand the particular way a problem engages the present. (Nohlen/Schultze, 2005: 337-340)

Following, I want to examine my leading research questions for this paper. They can be seen as a red line throughout and over the single chapters. The questions are based on certain political concepts, strongly related to a historical development, and analyzed in a comparative way.

- How can the current political structure of the Ethiopian state be analysed throughout history, taking into consideration that Ethiopia has never been colonized by the Europeans?
- Which role does the multi-ethnic federalism that provides for the right to secession in the Ethiopian Constitution, play nowadays?
- How can Ethiopia be located and differentiated in the Horn of Africa as a political region under the perspective of the balance of power?

Considering my leading research question, I came up with the following hypotheses, trying to verify or falsify them throughout my research work and examine them in the conclusion:

- The provisions of a liberal democratic constitution conflict with the reality of the authoritarian centralist practice and therefore jeopardize the future of federalism.
- In multi-ethnic Ethiopia, diversity has been a serious obstacle to state-building. In fact, the process of state building has been chequered with ethnic tensions, squabbles and conflicts.
- Multi-ethnic federalism has helped create conditions conducive to ethnic conflict, though not secession. And still, the multi-ethnic federal project has the potential to enhance interethnic harmony based on mutual respect and reciprocity.
- Even though Ethiopia lies within the region of balance of power at the Horn of Africa, with failed or conflicting states (Somalia, Sudan) surrounding it, it has remained a multi-ethnic state for centuries.

3. Theoretical Framework

In the following section I want to define all the important terminologies and concepts used in my work in order to make clear which specific interpretation is meant.

3.1. Typology of Conflict Resolution

In the following chapters I want to examine different concepts of conflict resolution, even though it will become obvious later on that only the federal concepts are relevant in the Ethiopian case. The concepts themselves are briefly described in a theoretical framework and country examples are given where expedient. The term ‘destructive’ does not imply that these concepts have less prospects of success, even though a correlation is empirically demonstrable.

3.1.1. Destructive Concepts of Conflict Resolution

The term ‘destructive’ is chosen because of its negative appraisal referring to the ultimate aim of destructive concepts of conflict resolution to undermine or eliminate ethnic differences within a given society. Normally a hierarchical relation, rather than an equal coexistence between the distinct ethnic groups of a society is provided.

3.1.1.1. Secession and Separation

Haverland (1987: 384) describes secession as a simple factual process which can be defined as “the separation of part of the territory of a State, carried out by the resident population with the aim of creating a new independent State or acceding to another existing State (...) in the absence of consent of the previous sovereign.”

Generally, secession can be described as an act or a process by which a part of a state withdraws from the bigger state to become independent without necessarily receiving the consent of the whole or other constituent parts of the state. To understand secession under international law one has to put it into the broader context of the right to self-determination to which it is related. (Smis, 2008: 107)

Paul Brietzke (1995: 35) argues that “(s)ecession is only the most extreme self-determination remedy, lying at the top of a pyramid. Below secession and in descending order of a dis-integration, steps on this self-determination pyramid include: a nation’s limited control over its defence and foreign policy, perhaps with central government consent in the most sensitive areas (...).”

Within international law, secession and its implications lie between two parameters: the territorial integrity of states (static), which are regarded as the main subjects under international law, and the right to self-determination (dynamic). The right to self-determination can be found in Resolution 1541 (XV) of the UN General Assembly under which the commitment of Art. 73 e) of the UN-Charter refers to “a territory which is geographically separated and is distinct ethnically and/or culturally from the country administering it.” In order to that, the Friendly-Relations-Declaration puts the right to self-determination and the acceptance of territorial integrity next to each other. (Marauhn, 1997: 107f)

Further explanations on secession and the right to self-determination can be found in chapters 3.9. and 3.10.

3.1.1.2. Unintended Assimilation and Relocation

Unintended assimilation and relocation are two opposing political concepts, which are aimed at homogenization of a society. Hereby a distinction has to be made between unintended and voluntary assimilation. Voluntary assimilation occurs when persons belonging to a group with a certain cultural background are in contact with others; normally it does not correlate with ethnic conflicts. It is considered a result of attraction

of a dominant group as for example observable in immigration countries. Unintended assimilation, on the other side, happens under hidden or open pressure of a dominant group. During the assimilation process, minorities give up their own ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity and instead adopt elements of the dominant group. (Emminghaus, 1997: 43)

The success of an assimilation policy depends on the integration capability of the dominant society. Theodor Hanf (1991: 83) argues that an assimilation policy is most successful when, on the one hand side, the dominant group is numerically superior and its culture possesses a high prestige within the given society and on the other side, the minority group is marginalized.

The opposite of assimilation is (forced) relocation. Forced eviction and relocation of bigger groups are meant to solve the problem of ethnic and cultural diversity simply by bringing “the other” outside a certain area or a country. Ethiopia illustrates a good example for a targeted relocation policy. (Emminghaus, 1997: 44) As an example one can mention the great famine of the years 1984/85 which was intentionally used as an excuse to relocate certain groups in order to reach strategic military objectives. The aim behind it was to stop the support of the rural populations for the enemy. At the same time, this policy meant the deliberated destruction of cultural and ethnic pre-existing structures. (Pankhurst, 1990 cit. Emminghaus, 1997: 44)

3.1.1.3. Dominance and Discrimination

Dominance is the most practiced form of conflict resolution in multi-ethnic states. In contrast to the above mentioned concept, homogenization is not the primary goal. There are no great efforts to assimilate a minority to the dominant culture. Instead minorities are permanently discriminated and disadvantaged. A typical example for this attitude would be the South African apartheid regime which despite of numerical minority excluded the majority of the population from political, economic and social participation. Christoph Emminghaus (1997: 45) concludes that hegemony of a

dominant group can never be an appropriate instrument to resolve ethnic conflicts. Hegemony is not compatible with the principles of democracy, although the history and some political systems show us that under the cloak of democracy hegemonic control was and is practiced. The roots of violent conflicts often lie within systems of hegemonic control and practice, especially where minorities are suppressed and discriminated. (Hanf, 1991: 69)

3.1.2. Constructive Concepts of Conflict Resolution

Contrarily to the destructive concepts of conflict resolution, the constructive ones are mainly based on democratic principles. Common to all of them is the fact that ethnic pluralism within a given society is accepted and no homogenization is forced by the dominant group.

Following, I briefly want to examine the most important cornerstones of the term ‘autonomy’. In domestic law, the term autonomy is meant as a part of self-government of certain public corporations and institutions. Constitutional autonomy is an essential condition of statehood. It includes the power to regulate inner affairs by enacting legal rules. (Forsthoff, 1973: 480) In international law, autonomy means that parts of an existing state territory are authorized to govern themselves in certain matters by enacting laws and statutes, without constituting a new state. (Creifelds, 1990: 126)

Generally spoken, the concept of autonomy is not a well-defined legal concept. Nowadays it is used in three different sciences. In Philosophy, autonomy means the power of a human being to self-determination based on the rational will of the individual. In natural science the concept describes organic independence, and in political and law sciences Hans-Joachim Heintze (1998: 7) examines four conceptions of autonomy: (1) the right to act upon one’s own discretion regarding certain issues; (2) used as a synonym for independence; (3) used as a synonym for decentralization; and (4) as an exclusive power of legislation, administration and adjudication in specific areas of an autonomous entity.

Normally autonomy is granted to groups within a state, which are defined territorially or by certain characteristics. These groups might be called a 'nation, a 'people' or sometimes a 'minority'; none of whom defined in international law. The interplay of states and these groups is shaping the implementation of any rights of autonomy in practice. (Gilbert, 2002: 3)

Autonomy guarantees internal self-government within a limited territory, group or among persons, thus recognizing a partial independence from the influence of the national or central government. Sovereignty is the only limit for autonomy solutions. The subjects of autonomy are always a certain group, minority, or an indigenous people. The prerequisites of autonomy are the recognition as a minority or ethnic group and the acceptance of collective rights. In state practice it is preferred to direct minority protection to the individual rather than to a group or community. Autonomy always searched the balance between existing territorial states and the legitimate expressions of national and cultural identity upon the smaller groups. (Heintze, 1998: 15ff)

3.1.2.1. Territorial Autonomy

Territorial autonomy can be considered as the most important concept of autonomy. Under the provision of territorial sovereignty, one or several areas may be given a (political) status. This status includes the competence of self-government to regulate certain matters. Further, territorial autonomy takes the particular historical and regional circumstances of minority into consideration. It can be regarded as a form of group protection in a geographically defined territory. All the people living in this territory are subjects of the autonomous status. Other prerequisites are the security of the citizens living in the autonomous area, and the creation of political representatives and elected bodies which are necessary for the democratic legitimization of the state structure. (Heintze, 1998: 18f)

The quality of territorial autonomy is measurable by following criteria, given by Christina Scherrer (1994: 61): First, it depends on the degree of the control over the territory and its natural resources by nationalities or ethnic groups and the distribution

between the federal states and the central government. Second, these groups are endowed of self-government with legislative, executive and judicative instances. Third, a fair representation within the institutions of the central government has to be guaranteed. Fourth, the regional government has the right to levy taxes within the regional state and possesses an own budget and financial administration. Fifth, the protection and promotion of regional cultures as well as means of communication (e.g. radio and press) are a necessity in order to guarantee an efficient territorial autonomy.

Also Heintze (1998: 20) argues that territorial autonomy as a concept for conflict resolution includes the decentralization of the administration, an independent administration with certain legislative competences and virtual separation from the law of the state.

3.1.2.2. Cultural Autonomy

The concept of cultural autonomy, basically invented by Karl Renner, relies on the personality principle and is limited to cultural affairs. Renner further examines the institutional realization of cultural autonomy which includes that cultural or linguistic nations have the executive as well as the legislative and administrative power, although limited to the cultural area. (Hanf, 1991: 61)

Cultural autonomy is regarded as autonomous self-government of cultural affairs by a group or minority. In this sense it can be seen as personal autonomy limited to cultural affairs which include identity issues such as language and education. Minorities have the right to decide freely on these issues without any influence of the majority or the state. Cultural autonomy can be implemented as the autonomy of schools. On the other side, the separation from the majority culture can lead to isolation and alienation of the minority group. (Heintze, 1998: 21)

Other elements of cultural autonomy are a veto right of all the ethnic groups regarding the filling of political positions at the central level, as well as the selection of a language of power. (Hanf, 1991: 66)

3.1.2.3. Personal Autonomy

The relationship between ethnicity and the state has been labeled the principle of territoriality and personality. Personal autonomy is based on the personality principle, whereas its subjects are the members of ethnic groups. The concept of personal autonomy does not apply to separated areas of certain groups. Instead it works irrespective of the size of the minority group and avoids the problem of territorial autonomy, that is, creating new minorities within the autonomous area. (Heintze, 1998: 22)

Moreover, it prevents emerging disputes over the size of the autonomous region and the issue of secession. Personal autonomy institutionalizes the political participation of a minority in the decision-making process. A corporate body or institution represents the group or minority in relation to the state and has the competence to govern certain minority affairs. The concept is especially applicable where territorial autonomy is not feasible because different groups, whose areas of settlement overlap, are hostile. (Heintze, 1998: 23)

3.1.2.4. Functional Autonomy

The concept of functional autonomy includes transferring selected state functions and rights to certain minority group organizations. In most of the cases the competences for culture, media, education and religion, insofar as they are essential for the group identity, are handed over to the minority. Moreover, functional autonomy can promote the integration of minorities into the state and calm down ethnic tension by supporting competence, initiative, and interest of the organizations and the provision of financial support. The concept can be considered as the easiest and fastest way to improve the political and social participation of minority groups. A disadvantage is the lack of a position under public law. (Heintze, 1998: 23f)

3.1.2.5. Federalism

For Burgess & Gagnon (1993 cit. Watts, 1998: 120), federalism refers to a genus of political organization encompassing a variety of species, including federations, confederacies, associated statehoods, unions, leagues, condominiums, constitutional regionalization, and constitutional home rule.

Elazar describes federalism as a major principle of political import. He believes that the federalist revolution is among the most widespread and maybe most unnoticed of the various revolutions currently occurring around the world. He examines that nearly 40 per cent of the world's population live within a system of formally federal politics. Another third lives in a system that applies federal arrangements in some way (Elazar, 1987: 6). But why Federalism? He claims that federalism “directs the attention of political science away from a principal concern with the nature of regime to a principal concern with the character of political relationships between political units, between governors and governed, between members of the body politics” (Elazar, 1987: 31f).

After many years of being ignored as a proper subject for political study, federalism has become a major issue in world affairs and consequently in political science. Daniel J. Elazar (1993: 190) argues that “federalism should be understood both in its narrower sense as intergovernmental relations and in its larger sense as the combination of self-rule and shared rule through constitutionalized power sharing in a non-centralized basis.”

Regarding the expansion of federal politics, Elazar identifies three basic phenomena: First, the emergence of modern nation-states, which are encompassing large territories and populations, and arising problems of internal distribution of power. Second, a breakdown of the pre-modern communities with its authority features based on fixed social relationships. And third, a breakdown of the old aristocratic principles in order to build up a new commitment to equality resulted in a concomitant demand for the creation of a more democratic social and political order. (Elazar, 1987: 110)

Federal politics have been designed to incorporate elements of republicanism and pluralism. The idea behind national representation was to ensure that politics would have a deliberative character. (Sunstein, 1988: 331) The longest traditions of continuing and remarkably effective federalism under states constitutions can be found in the USA (1789), Switzerland (1848), Canada (1867), and Australia. On the other hand, not only the proliferation of federal systems and federations¹ but also the failure of significant numbers of them can be found in the Third World and more recently in Eastern Europe. (Watts, 1998: 132)

Some scientists as Ivo Duchacek (1977: 14) equate the concept of federalism with the one of democracy. He argues that “federalism and democracy are twin brothers, but one of them is more dependent on his kin than the other. While democracy can prosper without federalism, federalism cannot exist without democratic pluralism which permits groups to be autonomous. Thus, it is sometimes argued, an authoritarian one-party, one-junta, or one-man regime, which by definition concentrates all political power in the hands of one group at one central point, is incompatible with the federal concept of divided powers.” He further examines that in systems which lack a plural mode of policymaking processes, ethno-territorial elites may still engage in meaningful quasi-federal give-and-take mutual accommodation so to face inter-ethnic conflict consensually even within a dictatorial framework.² (Duchacek, 1977: 14)

Regarding the connection to democracy, Dennis Mueller (n.d.) claims that although many scholars emphasize the advantages of federalism - and there do exist some good examples where it functions - at present there are only few states following federalism.

¹ Many researchers use the concepts of *federalism* and *federation* interchangeably. Assefa Fiseha (2007: 102f) explains federalism as an organizing principle that “advocates a multi-tiered government combining elements of shared-rule through common institutions for some purposes and regional self-rule for constituent units for some other purposes”, while federations “refer to tangible institutional facts”. That would mean that federations are used to describe systems of government and to constitute the institutional and structural techniques so to achieve the goals of federalism. (Teshome/Záhorik, 2008: 4)

² Here Yugoslavia could be given as an example of a federal system where regional dictators engage in an inter-elite accommodation on behalf of their ethnic communities, thereby creating a genuine ethno-territorial federal political culture. (Duchacek, 1977: 14) Moreover Ethiopia can be counted to this category, where the political federal system is mainly based on a one-party regime.

To explain the reason for that, he argues that when federalism is chosen as political background of a system it fails to survive, “not because of any fundamental difficulty in the outcomes it produces, but of the existence of forces in democracy, which undermine it.”

Alfred Stepan (1999: 19) argues that federal rather than unitary states are the form most often associated with multinational democracies. They are associated with large populations, extensive territories, and democracies with territorially based linguistic fragmentation. As a matter of fact, every single democracy in a territorially based multilingual and multinational polity is a federal state.

Some of the many multinational policies of the world are democracies, more specifically: Switzerland, Canada, Belgium, Spain, and India; all of them are federal. Although all these democracies, except for Switzerland³, have had problems establishing an efficient federation, they remain reasonably stable. On the other hand Sri Lanka, a territorially based multilingual and multinational unitary state, did not manage to persist as a peaceful federation and ended up in a bloody civil war that lasted for more than 15 years. The fact that these nations chose to adopt a federal system suggests that federalism may help these countries managing the problems arising through ethnic and linguistic diversity. Stepan further argues if multi-ethnic countries such as Indonesia, Russia, Nigeria, China, and Burma are ever to become stable democracies, they will have to build up federal systems that allow cultural diversity, guarantee the means to secure a certain socioeconomic development and a general standard of living among all of their citizens. (Stepan, 1999: 20)

He further makes a distinction between two ways federalism can be achieved: On the one hand, there are “coming together federations” which appear when sovereign states decide voluntarily to form a federation due to certain reasons like security or economic purposes, governmental efficiency, and so on. On the other hand, there are “holding-together federations” which mainly emerge after consensual parliamentary decisions to

³ Even Switzerland had the Sonderbund War, which ended up in the secession of the Catholic cantons in 1848. (Stepan, 1999: 19)

maintain a unitary state by establishing a multi-ethnic federal system, in order to avoid ethnic and/or regional conflicts. (Stepan, 1999: 20ff)

Ronald Watts outlines three main conclusions from the federalism discourse: “First, in the context of the contemporary global scene, federal political systems combining shared rule and self-rule do provide a practical way of combining the benefits of unity and diversity through representative institutions (...). Second, the effectiveness of a federal political system depends on the degree of public acceptance of the need to respect constitutional norms and structures, and on a spirit of compromise and tolerance. Third, within the broad genus of federal systems and even within the narrower species of federations there are many variations in the application of the federal idea.” (1998: 133)

During the time of Colonialism on the African continent, the colonial rulers followed a unitary system of government. Only the British colonial power had tried to introduced colonialism in some of their colonies, which was perceived as continuation of “divide and rule” by the African nationalists and anti-colonial leaders and therefore strongly rejected. After the Second World War and the independence of most of the African colonies, the new political rulers built up a unitary system of government rather than choosing a federal system. Until now, most of the African states are governed unitarily, whereas the political power lies in the hand of the central government. There were fears that federalism might reinforce tribalism and endanger the new established national states. Further, the possibility existed that minorities could collaborate with the neighbouring hostile countries.⁴ One of the big problems with federal states in Africa is the fact that members of various ethnic groups who do not belong to the specific region they are living in, are persecuted and expelled. After the adoption of the federal system in Ethiopia in 1991, many massive massacres and persecutions occurred. (Teshome/Záhorik, 2008: 5f)

⁴ At this point one can mention the recent war between Ethiopia and the Islamic groups of Somalia (ICU) from 2006 to 2008. The international media and western scholars had predicted that the ethnic Somalis of Ethiopia living in the Ethiopian Somalis regional state would collaborate with the neighbouring Somali Islamists and therefore endanger the Ethiopian Federation. (see ICG, 2007: 2ff)

Eghosa Osaghae (2004:174 cit. Teshome/Záhorik, 2008: 7) argues that federalism is necessary for the African countries to manage their problems emanating from ethnic diversity and unequal social, political and economic conditions. It is an important means of accommodating differences in a multi-ethnic state.

3.2. Conflict Resolution within the Federal State

In the following chapters I want to examine some forms of federalism concluding with multi-ethnic federalism which is especially relevant in the case study of Ethiopia in the chapters later on.

3.2.1. Ethno-regional Federalism

Ethnic federalism merges the political and ethnic structure of a state's territory; a common argumentation, which has its origin in the time of Enlightenment in the 19th century. Thereafter the integration of different ethnic, cultural, confessional, but also economic regions into a common state territory is a necessity. Moreover, federal structures are conducive to keep economic, external, and military tensions within a heterogeneous society down. Ethno-regional federalism can be seen as a compromise between an integration, correlating with a relatively homogenization on the one side, and the protection of regional self-reliance and heterogeneity on the other side. (Emminghaus, 1997: 57)

A good example of ethno-regional federalism would be the former Soviet Union where ethnic groups living in a certain area were given the right to create their own regional state on the basis of the principle of self-determination. The failure of this model, which resulted in the breakdown of the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991, was not due to the ethnic structure of the federation. Communism, rather than federalism is agreed to be the main cause of the failure. (Heintze, 1998: 25)

Some scholars positively claim that ethnic federalism reduces ethnic groups' disparity and secession of certain regions, enables self-rule to ethnic groups and therefore leads to ethnic harmony. The opposite argument is that ethnic federalism forces ethnic conflicts, increases secession, suppresses individual citizen's rights and probably leads to the disintegration of the state. (Teshome/Záhorik, 2008: 4)

3.2.2. Functional Federalism

With the idea of parliamentary democracy, a new line of argument within the field of political science occurred. It constitutes the theoretical background for functional federalism. Thereafter, the main goal is not the integration of the various regions but the operation of the democratic state as a whole. This aim can be reached through a vertical power sharing between the federal state and the member states which offers an additional division of powers and power control. Further, the oppositional parties on the federal level are allowed to enable politicians to participate equally in the forming of a government within the member states to be therefore, in medium term, able to take over the leadership on the federal level. Functional Federalism postulates better requirements for the participation of the whole population in the decision-making process. At the same time important regional issues gain more political relevance. And finally, in case of a crisis situation the political pressure is distributed to different institutions. (Emminghaus, 1997: 59f)

3.2.3. Asymmetrical Federalism

Asymmetrical federalism combines certain elements of the above two forms of federalism. It is not meant to be a universal approach; instead it appears to reach its full capacity in conflict resolution and prevention under the precondition especially in cases where no symmetrical or homogenous allocation of competences between the federal state and its member states is guaranteed. Following the concept of asymmetrical federalism, different levels of competences and therefore different degrees of autonomy

are delegated to the single territorial units. Examples for asymmetrical federalism would be Spain and Canada. (Emminghaus, 1997: 61)

3.2.4. Multi-ethnic Federalism

The delegation of state power to ethnic groups is based on certain assumptions: First, most people belong to an ethnic group by virtue of the language they speak and a common culture they share. In this sense they are enduring and do not change over time. Second, people belonging to the same ethnic group normally live together in geographically distinct communities, a phenomenon which makes the delegation of power to such units much easier. Third, ethnic groups tend to be homogenous and the people who belong to the group share similar values and interests. Fourth, ethnic groups can be seen as organized political entities, whose members follow certain social rules. Fifth, the concept of democracy is based on respect for language and culture. Therefore democracy applies especially to ethnic communities which have these attributes. Sixth, ethnic group rights are more important than individuals, class or gender rights. Considering this, democracy should be based on power sharing among distinct groups. (Poluha, 1998: 30)

In a multi or poly-ethnic federation, neither the federal state nor the constituent states are ethnically homogenous. The distinct ethnic groups decide voluntarily to form a common nation or state by their free will. Political integration is achieved because smaller units work together in the federal organs which leads to the result that different ethnic groups constitute the majority. Important for the function of this federalism is a high degree of will to belong to a unity. (Heintze, 1998: 27)

3.3. Ethnicity

Jon Abbink (1997: 159) uses the term “ethnicity” to refer to a cultural interpretation of decent and historical tradition by a group of people, as opposed to others, and expressed in a certain behavioural or cultural style. Further, ethnicity can be described as a variable quality in the cultural and historical identity of a human which occasionally overlaps with regional, political or economic differences. It can be understood as one part of a person’s or group’s social identity and is articulated in different situations of conflict, such as conquest, incorporation, assimilation or marginalization. Often it is also used consciously in a political sense by a collective. In that sense social relations are by historical memory and a common cultural identity as categories of identification or as a movement to secure collective interests.

The phenomenon of ethnicity is often referred to be a reason for violent conflicts in Africa. Obviously, a certain truth lies in that, when taking into consideration that in many cases politicized ethnicity and ethnic-based antagonism have been central factors in conflicts. Therefore it was and is quite common in post-colonial Africa to suppress them and/or give official recognition to the importance of ethnicity. In this sense, Ethiopia is an exception. Through the politics of the EPRDF⁵-led government ethnicity and ethnic identity became the ideological basis of political organization and administration especially through the incorporation in the federal Constitution of 1994. No wonder that in contemporary Ethiopia the discourse of ethnicity has become strongly politicized. (Abbink, 1997: 159f)

Anthony Smith (1996: 447) describes an ethnic community or ‘ethnie’ as a “named human population of alleged common ancestry, shared memories and elements of common culture with a link to a specific territory and a measure of solidarity.”

According to Levis Aalen (2011: 10f) ethnic groups are perceived as sharing common cultural traits, language, religion, history, and tradition. A primordial understanding of

⁵ Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front is the rebel guerrilla movement, which ousted Mengistu’s communist regime in 1991. Its core is the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), a movement which was founded in the mid-1970s in the northern region of Tigray. (Abbink, 1997: 159)

ethnic identities implies that the members of ethnic groups share cultural commonalities which are stable, constant and provide the basis for a common action. These shared traits are natural, inborn, and inherited or determined by physical or genetic characteristics.

Together with other contemporary scholars, which disagree with the primordial approach arguing that it does not capture the essence of ethnic identities and cannot explain why ethnicity has remained a source of political action (Aalen, 2011: 11), Abbink (1997: 160) also questions the assumption that the ethnic identity of a group is a reflection of a primordial group character, seen as a natural unit in which people of a multi-ethnic state have to live. Instead he argues that “an ethnic revival is primarily a result of failing state policy, which excludes certain ethno-regional groups, and of a political strategy of aspiring but blocked elite groups produced by the national educational system in a situation of economic stagnation.”

According to that, instrumentalist and constructivist scholars argue that ethnicity is not a given but rather dynamic and flexible phenomenon created by human thought and action. Following the instrumental approach, ethnicity is strategically used and can be manipulated for political ends. (Bates, 1987) For constructivist ethnicity is to only a matter of strategy but also a selective interpretation of real cultural experiences of history and traditions in order to provide a basis for political mobilisation. (Young, 1993: 24f)

According to the constructivist approach ethnicity is situational and relational. Leivise Aalen (2011: 14) further examines that ethnicity is only one of many identities, it is not necessarily the most important and overarching identity and it does not need being politicised, not even in societies with a high degree of ethnic diversity, but can remain as a social category without political actions. Other forms of identification such as gender, religion, or class can have a decisive effect on political mobilization within a given society. At the same time one has to consider that individuals who have an ethnic identity do exhibit several other identities at the same time. Out of the available cultural repertoire, individuals have many identities to choose from. The identities they chose are not separated from each other, they cut across each other and people share similar/same identities at different times. On a next level ethnicity refers to relationships between

groups whose members consider themselves distinct from others and they may be ranked hierarchically within a society. As a result, there may be a high correlation between ethnicity and class which means that it is likely that individuals belonging to a specific ethnic group may also belong to a specific social class. (Eriksen, 1996: 30f)

3.4. Nation, Nationality and People

The word 'nation' originates from the Latin and clearly conveyed the idea of common blood ties. Before, it was derived from the past participle of the verb 'nasci' which means 'to be born'. The Latin noun 'nationem' connotes 'breed' or 'race'. When introduced in the English language in the late thirteenth century, its primary connotation was of a blood related group. (Conner, 1994: 94f) By the early seventeenth century, 'nation' was being used to describe the inhabitants of a country, regardless of the ethno-national composition of the population, and therefore becoming a substitute for less specific human categories such as 'people' or 'citizenry'. (Williams, 1976: 178)

What is a nation? Ernest Gellner (1983: 53ff) argues that there are two major candidates for the construction of the theory of nationality: will and culture. Both concepts are important and relevant but neither one of them seems adequate. Two variables are crucial for the formation and maintenance of a (national) group: first, will, voluntary adherence and identification, loyalty, solidarity, and second, fear, coercion and compulsion. Most community structures are based on a mixture of loyalty and identification as well as hopes and fears. To define nations in terms of a shared culture we have to take into consideration that "human history is and continues to be well endowed with cultural differences." (Gellner, 1983: 54) When general social conditions are standardized, homogenous, centrally sustained high cultures, pervading entire populations and not just elite minorities, a situation arises where educationally well-defined and unified cultures appear, which human beings willingly identify with. In this sense the culture seems to be the natural repository of political legitimacy. Under the mentioned conditions, nations can indeed be defined in terms of will and culture. Men will be politically united with those who share the same culture. In a further step, politics

will extend their boundaries to the limits of their cultures, to impose and protect their culture with the boundaries of their power. The fusion of will, culture and polity forms a nation. (Gellner, 1983: 55)

The formation of nations in the modern world is characterized by both territorial and ethnic principles and components, and represents an uneasy confluence of a recent ‘civic’ and an ancient ‘genealogical’ model of social and cultural organization. A ‘nation-to-be cannot survive without a homeland, or a myth of common origin and decent. (Smith, 1986: 149) This dualism, incorporated in the concept of ‘nation’, has resulted in a profound ambiguity in the present-day relations between *ethnie* and the hosting states. Very few existing nations have succeeded in bringing the two poles together and making the *ethnie* co-extensive and fully congruent with the state. (Smith, 1986: 150)

To look at the Ethiopian Constitution the terms *nation*, *nationality* and *people* are defined in Article 39, Section 5 as followed:

A “Nation, Nationality or People” for the purpose of this Constitution, is a group of people who have or share a large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable predominantly contiguous territory.

The differentiation of the three terms has not been stated in any official document. Alem Habtu (2005: 324) assumes that the three words denote a hierarchy of ethnic groups from large (“nation”) through medium (“nationality”) to small (“people”) in both numerical size and political significance. As an example he names Oromo as a nation, the Agew/Kamyr as a nationality, and the Koma as people.

3.5. Nationalism

By 'nation', Anthony Smith (1996: 447) means a "human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties." In that sense, he sees 'nationalism' "as an ideology movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population (...) (which) constitute an actual or potential 'nation'." By the idea of 'the nation', nationalists are able to mobilize, unify and legitimate the goals of different sub-elites in order to extend their power. (Smith, 1996: 448)

Regarding the difference between a state and a nation, the state can be defined as a legal institution. The Montevideo Convention of 1933 claims "(t)he state as a person in international law should possess the following qualifications: (a) a permanent state; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; (d) a capacity to enter in relations with other States."

The nation, on the other side, can be seen as a contrivance of historians and political scientists, therefore, in the words of Benedict Anderson, "an imagined political community". (cit. Gilbert, 2002: 3) The belief that every state is a nation, or that each sovereign state is at the same time a national state, blurs the human understanding of political realities. In common usage of language these two distinct relationships are frequently confused. Geoff Gilbert (2002: 3) therefore describes a State as "legal and political organization, with the power to require obedience and loyalty from its citizens. A nation is a community of people, whose members are bounded together in a sense of solidarity, common culture, a national consciousness."

Nationalism engenders nations. It uses the pre-existing, historically inherited proliferation of cultures and cultural wealth (most of the time) selectively, and most often transforms them radically. The cultures, nationalism claims to defend and revive are often its own inventions or are modified for a certain purpose. The national symbolism is drawn from the "healthy, pristine, vigorous life of the peasants", the "folk". The nationalist self-presentation gains its ground when an alien high culture and its oppressions are resisted by a cultural revival and reaffirmation and eventually by a war of liberation. In case nationalism manages to prosper, it eliminates the alien high

cultures, but on the other hand does not replace it by the old local low culture; instead it revives or invents a local high culture of its own, which is apparently linked to earlier local folk style and dialects. (Gellner, 1983: 57)

Ernest Gellner further claims that nationalism is a very distinct species of patriotism which becomes pervasive and dominant under certain social conditions, which, as a matter of fact, prevail in the modern world. Nationalism as a way of patriotism is distinguished by following features: the units are based on a high culture and appear homogenous; they are of a certain size which enables them to hold up an educational system which keeps a literature culture going. Their populations are anonymous, fluid and mobile and they are poorly endowed with internal sub-groupings. The individuals belong to them directly and not to, in virtue of its cultural style and not in virtue of membership to a certain sub-group. To conclude: homogeneity, literacy and anonymity are the key traits of nationalism. Under these conditions, a nation becomes a natural social unit which cannot normally survive without its own political shell, named the state. (Gellner, 1983: 138)

When considering nationalism in Ethiopia three ideas are important. First, Ethiopia follows a distinct form of nationalism whose influence can be found in the culture of the diverse ethnic groups which constitute the countries' polity. Second, with the modern nation-state, a new phenomenon of nationalism arose, which challenges cultural pluralism opposing cultural homogeneity. Third, the transformation of the basis of nationalism generates a political contest whose outcome depends on certain variables. (Gashaw, 1993: 138)

Taking the process of 'nation building' into consideration, Marina Ottaway (2002: 16) exemplifies: "Once nations were forged through 'blood and iron'. Today, the world seeks to build them through conflict resolution, multilateral aid, and free elections." Nationhood or a sense of a common identity, do by themselves not guarantee the viability for a state. Therefore, "the goal of nation building should not be to impose common identities on deeply divided peoples but to organize states that can administer their territories and allow people to live together despite differences." (Ottaway, 2002: 17) As a logical consequence the process of state building may require the disintegration

of old states and the formation of new ones. Nationalism, as a matter of fact, was the leading concept when building up the modern European states after World War II. The idea was that each nation, embodying a shared community of culture and blood was entitled to its own states. (Ottaway, 2002: 17) On the other hand side, colonial powers were responsible for the formation of new states in Africa and elsewhere in the world, replacing old and prior existing political and leadership structures, with new countries and governments.

3.6. The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism

To explore the relationship between culture and politics as well as between pre-modern ethnic ties and modern nations, Anthony Smith (1996: 445) examines three major trends: (1) the purification of culture through authentication, which can lead to cultural and social exclusion; (2) the universalization of ethnic choice through nationalist ideology, which engenders national solidarity and self-assertion; and (3) the territorialisation of memory, which inspires historical claims to historic homelands and sacred sites.

Ethnic and national politics on the one side can be characterized by instability, unpredictability and acute passions but on the other side can create solidarity and provide for a popular participation in politics. First, the politics of ethnicity and nationalism can describe the impact on ethnic and national identity, which signify either its usage in power struggles of leaders and parties, or the processes by which states create ethnic groups, nations and conflicts. Second, one can describe the impact of ethnicity and nationalism on politics, which signify either the ways chosen by ethnic groups or nationalist movements to reach their political goals, or the role culture and ethnicity plays when creating new states or influencing existing state systems. (Smith, 1996: 445f)

The first standpoint of ethnicity and nationalism is largely instrumentalist and modernist. It assumes that ethnicity is plastic and formable and can be used as an instrument mostly for the political elites. Nations and nationalism on the other side are both recent and the product of specific modern conditions. The second one is more primordialist and

prerennialist. It assumes that ethnies are primordial given of certain human conditions, and that nations are historical but immemorial. Therefore states, parties, bureaucracies and politics are regarded as public expressions of these pre-existing cleavages and cultural identities. Anthony Smith (1996: 446) concludes that by themselves, none of these standpoints is plausible or adequate. The first one fails to explain why particular ethnic groups emerge, change and dissolve, or why so many people choose to emigrate and assimilate to other ethnies, since it assumes what has to be explained. The second explanation may seem more plausible but is also untenable when assuming that particular nations are in fact immemorial. A more useful version of perennialism assumes that in most periods of history, nations are continually being formed and dissolved on the basis of pre-existing ethnic ties. (Smith, 1996: 445)

The instrumentalist approach on the other side fails to explain why ethnic conflicts are so unpredictable and often intense and why masses respond to the call of ethnic origin and culture. Moreover, it cannot explain why some ethnic groups are durable and persistent while others just disappear. The 'post-modern' perspective claims that ethnies and nations are simply cultural artefacts and constructs, which use pre-existing mythology, symbols and history for their own purposes. This approach fails to explain why millions of people are prepared to die for a cultural artefact and tends to exaggerate the ability of elites to manipulate the masses. (Smith, 1996: 446f)

Following the definitions of ethnicity and nationalism as described above, Anthony Smith concludes that:

- Most nations are modern; therefore nationalism is seen as an ideology and movement;
- Ethnies have emerged in every era of history, just some of them are durable;
- Many nations are formed on the basis of pre-existing ethnies, as a result, the ethnic model of a nation remains extremely influential;
- Nations which lack a dominant ethnic base often have great problems in building up a national consciousness and cohesion. (Smith, 1996: 447)

Concluding he argues that the relationship between pre-modern ethnic ties and modern nationalism are an important key factor for modern national and international politics.

The source of persistent instability of ethnic and national politics can be examined through the ambivalence over alien cultures. On the one side, an ethnic community seeks to compete with its neighbours by borrowing techniques and ideas but on the other side, it tries to purify its culture of alien elements, while conserving traditions and lifestyle. What makes ethnic and nationalist politics unpredictable are the political consequences of nationalism, taking into consideration the constant interaction of the uniqueness of peoples and the universalization of the ancient idea of chosenness. (Smith, 1996: 458)

3.7. Constitutionalism

Constitutionalism can be seen as legally defined limits to the power of the majority or to the sovereign state in any political form or entity (monarchy, presidential system, single-party system). These limits are self-imposed by the polity, following a process of debate and compromise. The function of a constitution is to protect individual rights of citizens and to restrain or prevent political developments which the majority or a self-declared sovereign power could impose on a minority. (Elster, 1988: 2f)

Stephan Holmes goes further, arguing that constitutionalism may appear essentially antidemocratic claiming that the basic function of a constitution is to remove certain decisions from the democratic process in order to limit the power of a community. In this regard, a constitution is institutionalized to disempower temporary majorities in the name of binding norms. But how can this system which appears to thwart the will of the majority be justified? He argues that citizens need a constitution, binding themselves to rigid rules in order to avoid tripping over their own feet. If voters would be able to get and do what they want, they would inevitably shipwreck themselves. (Holmes, 1988. 196)

Any written constitution – taking all the legal, historical and philosophical expertise influencing its production into consideration – must fulfil the function of a myth of

origin for the state in question. In the case of Ethiopia, the Constitution presents itself as the result of a freely negotiated matter of public concern, entered into by a group of previously independent, sovereign entities, the so called “nations, nationalities and people” of Ethiopia. As a matter of fact this was not the truth. As Assefa points out, these subunits had no prior independent existence. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was formed from the centre to ethno-territorial units rather than the other way round. (cit. Turton, 2006: 14) Regarding the distinction Alfred Stepan (1999 cit. Turton, 2006: 14) made, the Ethiopian federalism follows more the ‘holding together’ concept of federalism than the concept of ‘coming together’.

3.8. Democracy

For African citizens, *democracy* often means more than solely free elections; it is more encompassing rather than drawing up a new constitution and launching a multi-party system. According to a definition of the Human Development Report of 2003, it is more perceived as a way of life and a long term process of reorganizing the institutions of a civil society. The arising struggles are often not mainly over the access to political power but over the access to the daily opportunities of life, namely water, land, living space and basic social services. (Tetzlaff, 2008: 101f)

In this regard, one can quote the famous radical thinker Issa Shivji (2000: 34) who once wrote about popular democracy and popular power: “Popular power tries to address both the limits of parliamentary democracy and party politics while at the same time positing a new mode of politics. (...) (It) is meant to draw attention to the issue of political legitimacy and institutional organisation of state power.” He further claims to focus on “the right to self-determination” whose main principles are “the right to livelihood, right to food, shelter, education”, simply the “right to be human”. (Shivji, 2000: 34) He advocates a popular democracy through self-determination of people in their own policies according to the requirements of historic experience, culture and circumstances.

Referring to these requirements, Robert Dahl (1998: 147) examines five conditions for democracy, divided into three essential conditions:

- Control of military and police by elected officials;
- Democratic beliefs and political culture;
- No strong foreign control hostile to democracy

and two favourable conditions for democracy:

- a modern market economy and society;
- weak sub-cultural pluralism.

Looking at Africa, the transition processes to democracy open up from outright disaster in Somalia, DR Congo and Rwanda, to relative success as for example in South Africa, Namibia, Mali and Ghana, with stalemate being a frequent result as in Nigeria, Togo, or Kenya. Rainer Tetzleff (2008: 103) concludes that the key to the outcome of democratic transition in all cases is the quality of political leadership both in government and in opposition, and its capacity to control and transform existing hostile constituencies into mutual forms of accommodation.

The challenge of building democracies in multi-ethnic states has been a long discussed issue within the scientific community worldwide. As examined in chapter 4.2.8., there are new experiments with federalism to enhance governmental accountability to the public and defuse the potential of ethnic conflict. Federalism in the form of institutional arrangements as well as other kinds of power-sharing can lead to cooperation, particularly among political elites. In Africa different and competing forms of citizenship exist within the nation states and in ethnic communities which have their roots in the persistence of communal identities. Lahra Smith (2007: 568) outlines that citizenship is central to the democratic principle of self-rule and the distinction between citizens and subjects. At a minimum level, citizenship is a legal and formal position based on certain laws, whereas on a maximum level it is the expression of a state's sovereignty, in a sense that the state can decide who is counted to be a citizen and who not. Citizens encompass a set of rights and duties enjoyed by individuals. Moreover the concept captures the essence of belonging to a political unit its members feel

corresponding to. Subjects on the other side have no voice in the political decision-making-process. (Tully, 2000: 213 cit. Smith, 2007: 568)

3.9. Self-determination

The roots of the rights to self-determination lie back in the beginning of the twentieth century. Some claim that its origin can be found in President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, even though the word 'self-determination' itself cannot be found in the text. What is clearly traceable is an ultimate historical inspiration to the French Revolution back in the late eighteenth century. Self-determination connotes *national* self-determination and the constitution of ethno-culturally homogenous nation-states. The switch from *national* self-determination to a more nuanced concept of *peoples'* self-determination occurred after the Second World War. Self-determination of peoples became the basis, on which local and indigenous movements legitimate their claims for breakaway from the Colonial Power and less than that, for autonomy and self-governance within those states. (McWhinney, 2007: 1f)

During the second half of the twentieth century, self-determination was accepted as a right under international law. Its roots can be found in writings of eighteenth century theorists who tried to elaborate different views on democracy based on the consent of the governed and the sovereignty of the nation. The idea of the concept was further influenced by theories on nationalism. The word itself is borrowed from Immanuel Kant and other German scholars who considered "Selbstbestimmung" as an individual right to be morally free and thus not to be subjected to anyone or any authority. (Anaya, 2000: 3f)

The interpretation of self-determination framed by the concept of statehood can be already found in the history of origins of the UN-Charter, where the right to self-determination is not isolated but linked to the principle of equal rights, which itself does not refer to individuals but to states. (Marauhn, 1997: 109)

The distinction between the internal and external right to self-determination permits a new approach on the relation between autonomy and self-determination. The internal right to self-determination is claimed, by many scholars, synonymous with local autonomy. (Heintze, 1998: 9) The internal right to self-determination is already grounded in the *Friendly-Relations-Declaration*. The Declaration claims that “(b)y virtue of the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, all peoples have the right freely to determine, without external interference, their political status and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development, and every State has the duty to respect this right in accordance with the provisions of the Charter.” (Friendly-Relations-Declaration, 1970) To respect the sovereignty and integrity of a state, which is one of the main principles of international law, internal self-determination is a necessity to guarantee the above mentioned provision.

The question which arises is what the internal right to self-determination contains? An essential criterion is the legitimacy of state power, especially in regard to minorities. Holding the power of a state requires an elementary consensus among all the people living within a given state territory. In addition this would claim, at the same time, the right for democracy, which guarantees free and fair elections of a government by all populations, majority and minority groups of a country. However, internal self-determination presumes equal political participation and political self-organization and therefore the division of state power. (Marauhn, 1997: 113f)

3.10. Secession

After the break-up of the colonial power in Africa, many ethnical or regional movements tried to separate from the created state constructs and build up their own states. Nevertheless, it was almost impossible to break up the colonial boundaries with the result that rising resistance movements often resulted in long inexorable civil wars. Examples to mention here would be the separation of Eritrea from the Ethiopian state in 1993 resulting in an independent and international recognized Eritrean state and last

year's secession of Southern Sudan resulting in the establishment of two independent Sudanese states. Less optimistic and fulfilled are the separation tendencies in Western Sahara and Somaliland.⁶ Interestingly, these countries aspire the rebuilding of their states as they existed before the colonial rule. (Emminghaus, 1997: 41)

Other authors argue that after the independence of African states, secession was condemned as a priori detrimental to African interests. It was considered to be incompatible with the goal of African unity and would evoke a situation that could lead to the further 'balkanisation' of the continent. (Kamanu, 1974: 355)

The example of Eritrea shows the ambivalent character of secession. Thus the formal state-building process is accomplished; internal struggles are still on the agenda. An ethnic homogenous state Eritrea is non-existing; instead at least ten different ethnic groups can be counted. But still, this ethnic diversity is less responsible for inner state conflicts. Therefore Eritrea can be seen as a good example, where secession contributes to a relatively peaceful accommodation of distinct ethnic groups. Moreover, this secession ended the bitter interstate conflict with Ethiopia. (Emminghaus, 1997: 42)

Conflicts along ethnic lines cannot be solved by secession. Instead it simply divides the conflict into smaller dimensions. Further, new ethnic minorities can arise out of a newly declared homogenous state. To solve an ethnic conflict by secession is only possible, when one ethnic group holds the possession of a certain territory which does not domicile other ethnic minorities. (Emminghaus, 1997: 42)

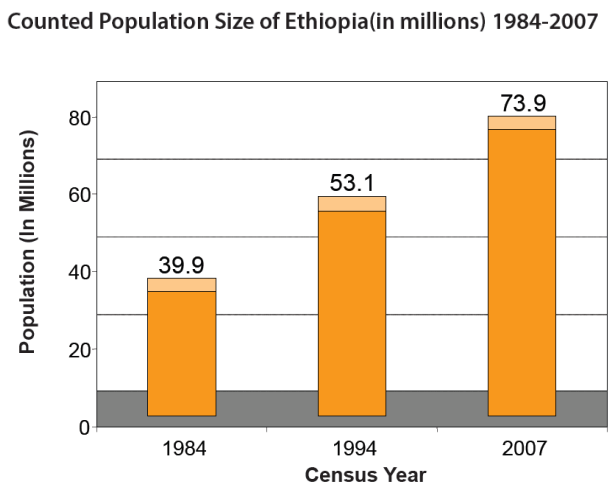
⁶ In Western Sahara the United Nations have tried for years to find a peaceful solution, inducing a referendum. Contrarily, Somaliland declared itself independent but this status is not recognized on the national and international level. (Emminghaus, 1997: 41)

4. Case Study Ethiopia

In the following chapters I want to discuss the case study of Ethiopia. First I want to outline a short country profile including a sub-chapter about ethnic diversity and the Ethiopian state as well as Ethiopian nationalism. Then, there is a historical analysis including the main political phases of the last century until now. The third part deals with the legal background of the recent system and the cornerstones of the Constitution of 1994. And finally, I discuss some important facts regarding the last election in 2010, its outcomes and resulting challenges for the future.

4.1. Country Profile

After Nigeria, Ethiopia is the second biggest country in the size of its population. Enumerated in the third Population and Housing Census in 2007, the total number of people living in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was 73,918,505. Of these, 37,296,657 (50.5%) were males and 36,621,848 (49.5%) were females. Just like other African countries, Ethiopia has shown an enormous and steady increase in its size of population during the last century. (Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Consensus, 2008: 9)



The country encompasses high levels of geographical variation. The highlands are divided by deep gorges which results in a separation of different centres of population from each other, and therefore supports peoples with different languages and cultures. Another geographically critical feature is the historical vulnerability of north eastern Ethiopia to famine, environmental degradation, warfare and misconceived policies that

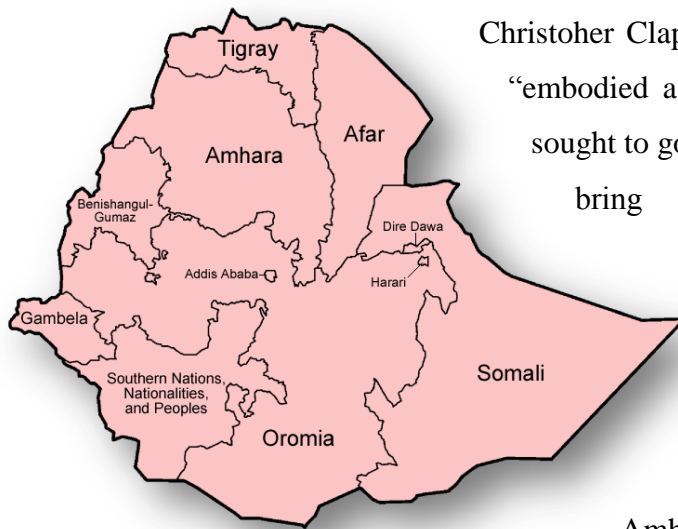
cause a movement of the population towards the south and west. Moreover, Ethiopia has a proximity to Arabia, Red Sea and the Nile valley, which linked it to the civilizations to the north and east. (Clapham, 2006: 18f)

Below, I would like to provide an overview of Ethiopia's political systems (African Elections Database, 2011):

1889-1931	Absolute Monarchy: Emperor Menelik II established a strong central authority
1931-1936	Traditional Monarchy (In practice, still an absolute monarchy)
1936-1941	Italian Occupation
1941-1955	Traditional Monarchy (In practice, still an absolute monarchy)
1955-1974	Traditional Monarchy
1974-1984	Military Regime under Haile Selassie
1984-1987	Military Regime & (De-Facto) One Party State (WPE)
1987-1991	One Party State (WPE)
1991-1995	Transitional Government/Multiparty Transition; EPRDF
1995-2010	Emerging Democracy
2010-	Restricted Democratic Practice under the EPRDF

4.1.1. Ethnic Diversity and the Ethiopian State

In his book *Historia di Ethiopia* (1928), the Italian scholar Conti Rossoni describes Ethiopia as “un museo di popoli” (“museum of peoples”), a notion which gives an accurate sense of Ethiopia’s ethnic religious, and linguistic diversity. The Ethiopian state itself – despite its possession of an ancient cultural core – has never been a homogenous political community or society. (Gashaw, 1993: 143)



Christoher Clapham (1988: 23) wrote that Ethiopia “embodied a claim to universal domination, and sought to govern any people whom it was able to bring under its control“.

After the introduction of the federal state structure in 1991, the following regional states – as they still exist nowadays - were

formed: (1) Tigray, (2) Afar, (3) Amhara, (4) Oromia, (5) Somali, (6)

Benishangul-Gumuz, (7) Southern Nations, Nationalities

and Peoples (a voluntary merger of five regional units), (8) Gambella, (9) Harari; later, (10) Addis Ababa and (11) Dire Dawa became the status of a city state and were put under federal jurisdiction.

For most of its history, Ethiopia has been ruled by oppressive regimes which identified themselves, and therefore supported a particular ethnic or religious identity. These centralist states structures influenced the drafting process of the current Constitution of 1994 but unfortunately, one cannot see any significant decentralization of power. (Herther-Spiro, 2007: 333) The history of Ethiopia is peppered with failed attempts to create a multi-ethnic unitary state in which “all citizens feel a primary allegiance to the state itself rather than to their particular ethnic group”. (Keller, 2005: 87)

Even though ethnicity in the Ethiopian context is defined by reference to the different languages, it is common for Ethiopians to have multiple ethnic genealogies as a result of

intermarriages over the past centuries. Also in the twentieth century, Ethiopia has continued to be ruled by centralized and oppressive regimes. Language and religious rights were heavily restricted under the rule of Haile Selassie until the coup d'état in 1974. Then the Derg established an authoritarian socialist regime whose ideology was based on the importance of national unity and “Ethiopia above all”. Cultural identities were suppressed, the use of local languages, traditional forms of governance, and cultural ceremonies forbidden. (Herther-Spiro, 2007: 334f)

In the 2007 census, more than eighty ethnic groups were listed. Out of them, ten have a population of one million and more (in comparison to 1994 were only seven ethnic groups had a population of one Million and above). The following table shows the total number and percentage of the ethnic populations:

Percentage Distribution of Major Ethnic Groups: 2007

Ethnic Group	2007		1994	
	Population		Population	
	Number	%	Number	%
Oromo	25,488,344	34.5	17,080,318	32.1
Amhara	19,867,817	26.9	16,007,933	30.1
Somali	4,581,793	6.2	3,160,540	5.9
Tigrie	4,483,776	6.1	3,284,568	6.2
Sidama	2,966,377	4.0	1,842,314	3.5
Guragie	1,867,350	2.5	2,290,274	4.3
Welaita	1,707,074	2.3	1,269,216	2.4
Hadiya	1,284,366	1.7	927,933	1.7
Afar	1,276,372	1.7	979,367	1.8
Gamo	1,107,163	1.5	719,847	1.4

(Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Consensus, 2008: 16)

4.1.2. Nationalism in Ethiopia

Abyssinian nationalism, whose origin derives from the Tigre/Amhara culture, for a long time was the hegemonic doctrine which was related to other Ethnic groups. However, in the last decades this nationalism faces new challenges from diverse regional groups. The newly claimed political agenda varied from secession to reorganization of the political structures of the state. As a result, the future existence of the Ethiopian nation-state raised serious doubts. Therefore, the countervailing forces against ethnic and regional challenges came from Ethiopian nationalism. The fact, that the Ethiopian state exists for more than three-thousand years and is grounded in the mythology of legends e.g. about King Solomon, David, and eventually Christ, has forged a distinct national identity/nationalism. „Ethiopian nationalism has time-tested resiliency“, as Solomon Gashaw (1993, 139) describes it. It survived numerous major crises all over its history but Ethiopian polity has repeatedly shown a strong national response. The successful repulsion of foreign encroachment and defence of the national territory has created a deep sense of pride in the idea of the Ethiopian nation.

Pierre Crebites (1935, 11 cit. Gashaw, 1993: 139) describes the European attitude towards Ethiopia in the beginning of the 20th century as followed: „Abyssinians are suffering from a „superiority complex“. Historical experiences as for example the defeat of the Ottoman attempt to expand from a costal base at Massawa in 1579 or the defeat of the Italians under Menelik at the battle of Adowa in 1896, have helped Ethiopia to develop techniques for survival as a nation-state through the accommodative or assimilative mechanisms of its ethnic groups.

The survival of the Ethiopian state required that all ethnic groups consider themselves as belonging to one Ethiopian nation. And still, the political disturbances of recent years have created a crisis of hegemony for Ethiopian nationalism. (Gashaw, 1993: 138-141)

4.2. Historical Analysis

In the following chapters I want to examine the main political approaches leading the country throughout the history. In a first step I want to mention some basics about ethnicity and ethnic identity in Ethiopia, then discuss the modern state formation, and in addition, I divide the recent history from the twentieth century until now in three main approaches: (1) the assimilation policy under the dominant Amhara regency; (2) the secessionist policy, with the secession of Eritrea and blazing Oromo nationalism; and (3) the ‘accommodationist’ policy after 1991. Donald Levine (1974: 72-80) divides this historical timeframe into the ‘Amhara Thesis’, the ‘Oromo Antithesis’ and the ‘Ethiopian Synthesis’.

4.2.1. Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity in Ethiopian Politics and History

To understand the present, one has to understand history. For this research paper it does not make sense to present the whole Ethiopian history from the ancient dynasties through the long process of state foundation until today. As mentioned in the introduction above the Empire of Ethiopia was able to defend itself successfully against a foreign colonization. Instead the Abyssinian emperors participated in the scramble for Africa at the end of the 19th century. Equipped with modern western firearms the Abyssinians, especially under emperor Menelik II, were able to conquer territory to the South, East, and West, which in the end tripled their primary state territory. This expansion phase marks the hour of birth for the modern Ethiopian state as it exists today. Also, this was the first time in African history that a modern state with a defined territory and population arose. (Auf, 1996: 113, cit. Emminghaus, 1997: 66) Moreover, the conflict lines, which are still visible and present until now, have had their origin in this time. Especially the ethnic concurrence has its roots in the demarcation of that era. (Emminghaus, 1997: 66)

The question which arose here is in what way historical ethnic identities are re-surfacing or re-created in the Ethiopia of today? How have the historical experiences shaped the group identity until now and how do they define the current politics? How can ethnic heritage be translated and transferred into political arrangements? These questions are important in order to prospect the future of the Ethiopian federation.

Daily examples of political reality in Ethiopia where cultural pluralism and ethnic values are being diminished and suppressed show that customary models and organizing principles of society from the ethnic past are not accepted by the state as a basis for present-day political and social reconstruction. Instead, they will largely disappear within the new political structures. It further has to be mentioned here that the actual Constitution of 1994 does not contain a structural and recognized place for traditional models and ideologies of a certain ethnic group or nationality. Actually, today's policy shows even less concern with the "common culture, bond, identity, consciousness and territory" as defined in the Constitution. As a result, the emergence of ethno-national movements and political parties as well as traditions of political organization, customary law and cultural autonomy provide elements of a value system and a fund of collective memory and identity. (Abbink, 1997: 162f)

One answer to the question of the incorporation of ethnic heritage into present politics could be autonomy and independence. In that sense, the federal concept of Ethiopia goes into the right direction. The problem is that none of the nine regional states is mono-ethnic, which means that the protection of minority rights is a necessity to be incorporated in the Constitution. "The spur to conflicts of interest and identities has been the expansion of central state power in Menilik's time, consolidated under the centralizing rule of Haile Selassie, framed in a narrative of modernity, development and authoritarian control." (Abbink, 1997: 163)

Paul Baxter (1996: 186) argues that in Ethiopia historical or ethnic group identities do not show a direct continuity with the past. A return to models of ethnic heritage for social and political purposes cannot be drawn as a solution to redress current problems within the state, if political mobilization of ethnicity is not a direct or logical consequence of past exploitation and repression.

Ethiopian politics of ethnicity have to be understood in a context of diverse authoritarian regimes throughout history, characterized by suspicion and inequality between the distinct ethnic groups. During the rule of Emperor Haile Selassie (1931-74) and the military Marxist regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam (1974-91) ethnic groups, their culture and languages were clearly ranked within the authoritarian state and ethnically based counter movements were oppressed. Since the establishment of the modern Ethiopian state at the end of the nineteenth century, inequality because of a certain ethnic affinity has been part of Ethiopian politics. The only way to gain political power or employment in the state administration had been through the adoption of Orthodox Christianity and the dominant Amharic language. And even after 1991, when the state politics of ethnicity were eradicated and new ones arose, suspicion across ethnic boundaries remained widespread. Nowadays the perception that the Tigrayans are the new ethnic ruling elite which attempts to monopolize political power and channel state resources to their own region in the north of the country is dominant. The reason for that is the fact that the TPLF is the dominant force within the EPRDF coalition and the central government. (Aalen, 2011: 4)

After the introduction of national self-determination the country was subdivided into different regional states, each with the right to exercise independent law making, executive and judicial power. Further, representatives of each ethnic group were given seats in the institutions at the central government level. Following the principles of a federal system the regional units are autonomous from the central government, while the central government at the same time incorporates, according to the constitutional mandate, regional units into the decision-making process. (King, 1982 cit. Aalen, 2011: 5) But these structures largely contradict the basic structure of the centralised party system. The centralised party organization of the EPRDF which basically controls all the regional governments undermines to a large extent the regional states' ability to act independently. Although the institutional structures are aimed to guarantee equal rights to the ethnic groups, the current situation is marked by distrust and domination. Aalen (2011: 6) concludes that even though "Ethiopia is a constitutionally decentralised state, its party system makes it highly centralised."

4.2.2. Nation and State Building in Ethiopia

In multi-ethnic Ethiopia, as almost everywhere in Africa, diversity has been a serious obstacle to state-building. The process of state-building has always been characterized by ethnic tensions, squabbles and conflicts. Even though ethno-regional identity politics is a relative recent phenomenon in Ethiopia, its roots can be found with the rise of the absolutist state by the middle of the twentieth century. Throughout history, the political actors have chosen divergent ways of dealing with diversity. From 1889 until 1991 the dominant Amhara followed an assimilationist policy. Since the 1960s, parallel to them, the Eritreans and some of the Oromo political entrepreneurs have forced a secessionist route. Finally, from the mid-1970s on, the Tigrayans have followed the 'accommodationist' alternative. (Abbay, 2004: 593)

The Ethiopian culture of statehood derives from both the hierarchical social structures of the northern highlands, which are instinctively authoritarian, and from the notion of conquest through which Ethiopia has imposed its rule over neighbouring peoples. Since Ethiopia was never colonised it missed the colonisation period in the 1950s and early 1960s when foundations of multiparty democracies were built up in many African states. At the same time, the younger educated Ethiopians were intensely alienated from the existing regime. This alienation together with the land issue and the question of nationality as a problem of internal ethnic differences were the key factors that led to a social revolution in 1974. The emperor was deposed and murdered, and the power got into the hands of radical soldiers, called the Derg, who soon established a governmental practice following Marxism Leninism. (Clapham, 2006: 20f)

For centuries, the highlands of Eritrea and Tigray in northern Ethiopia have been occupied by the Tigrayans meanwhile south of them the Amhara lived in the highlands of Wello, Gondar, Gojjam and northern Shewa. The largest ethnic group of Ethiopia, the Oromo, populated the area further south. These three principal ethnic groups did not live under the same political and territorial construct. Axum, the oldest major polity in the region, only had accommodated Eritreans and Tigrayans in its core region. The 'Solomonic' rulers who came into power 1270 were then expanding southwards,

annexing regions which were occupied by different ethnic and religious groups. Later in 1872, when a Tigrayan was crowned as Yohannes IV, Emperor of Ethiopia, the centre of power moved back to the north. During his regency until 1889, he, together with his most celebrated general, Ras Alula, effectively defended Ethiopia against European or Arab expansionist claims. (Erich, 1982 cit. Abbay, 2004: 594)

The two realities of political fragmentation and European presence formed the setting of the unfolding history of modern Ethiopia. Different rulers responded in different styles within the frame of a certain political structure to the internal and external challenges. Centralization and unification became the central dominant policies of Ethiopia's political history. The European presence represented both a threat to the cherished independence of the country and an opportunity for an ally against Egyptian expansionism. Furthermore, it opened up new possibilities of introducing Western (military) technologies, and modernization. But still, the attitude of Ethiopia's rulers towards Europeans remained ambivalent. They welcomed European technology but rejected foreign influence on their internal political affairs. (Zewde, 1991: 270f)

4.2.3. The Assimilation policy

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, Menelik, the king of Shewa, was able to collect enough firearms to gain power and expand southward and annex the huge landmass belonging to the Oromo. (Rubenson, 1976: 32f) The domination of the Amahara of Shewa led to an absolutist path, with the help of a standing army, taxation, bureaucracy, codified law and a rising market system. (Zewde, 1991: 110) The centralization of the administration followed the marginalization of economic, political and military bases of the feudal ethnic elites around the country. For sure, the existing administrative and academic institutional structures were not conducive to ethnic and cultural diversity; instead they clearly favoured assimilation. The homogenization of the Ethiopian society was perceived as a prerequisite for the emergence of a unitary Ethiopian state. Therefore language and history became crucial tools for degrading ethnic diversity. (Abbay, 2004: 594f)

4.2.3.1. The Politics of Language

During the process of political assimilation, Amharic became the national/official language of the country whereas all the other ethnic groups with different languages were obliged to study it. The state apparatus forced a policy of intense amharanization. At the same time, the destruction of ethnic particularities and varieties should on the one hand guarantee the rise of a unitary state in a uniform society and on the other hand maintain the political and economic status quo of the ruling Amharic elite. Amharic was also the language taught in the national university in Addis Ababa. (Abbay, 2004: 595) Under these conditions the empire got the appearance of what Ernest Gellner, a famous scholar of nationalism, calls “a prison-house of nations if ever there was one.” (1983: 85)

4.2.3.2. The Use and Abuse of History

History and the past are contested terrain. Often they are selectively remembered, conveniently forgotten, or sometimes even invented; therefore they may be used to justify and legitimize actions in the present and/or to provide a model for the future, created in accordance with certain traditions. (Hobsbaum/Ranger, 1983 cit. Sorenson, 1993: 38)

To start this chapter, I briefly want to examine the ‘territorialisation of memory’. From the time of Ernest Renan onwards, collective memories have been a vital element for the construction of a nation and the self-understanding of its nationalism. To build up a nation, shared memories must attach themselves to specific places and defined and limited territories. From the medieval and early modern era on the territorialisation of memory began to influence the way in which some states became increasingly congruent with their dominant ethnies. Whereas the boundaries of the states were formed by factors as diplomacy, inheritance, marriage alliances and conquest, memories related to certain turning-points in history or heroic figures became the basis for arising claims in popular memory because they were important for the development of the community. To create a

nation, nationalist regimes have used the public education system to emboss the feeling that the homeland has been ‘ours’ for generations, even when ruled by foreign powers. This sense has been reached through a picture of poetic landscape and remembrance of great events and exploits in the ethnic past. (Smith, 1996: 453ff)

Ethiopia is one of the oldest states in the world. It looks at a history of more than three-thousand years, a source of pride and identity of its people. Already more than hundred years ago, Ernest Renan forewarned – under recognition of the untapped energy and power of the past – that historical enquiry is dangerous to the concept of nation. “Le progrès des études historiques est souvent pour la nationalité un danger. L’investigation historique, en effet, remet en lumière les faits de violence qui se sont passés à l’origine de toutes les formations politiques.” (Renan, 1882)⁷ People within a political and territorial construct should learn how to forget the past and build their nation consensually on the basis of “a daily plebiscite”. (Renan, 1882/1995:57) As the Ethiopian history shows, it supports Renan’s statement, that history can be a real challenge to the process of state-building.

In Ethiopia political actors summon the past and selectively refer to certain events so as to make them serviceable for their ambitions. “As such, memory becomes the voice of the past listened to in the present and sung for the future. Endowed with this unique power of imagining identity by linking the past with the present as well as the future, memory has been a principal zone of political contest in Ethiopia.” (Abbay, 2004: 596)

An example of memory construction as a political tool in Ethiopia is Ras Alula who was Ethiopia’s most celebrated general during the last decades of the nineteenth century when fighting foreign invaders (e.g. Egyptians 1875 or Italians 1887) successfully. Nevertheless his heroic famousness and his unique achievements for the Ethiopian state were irrelevant for the absolutist and hegemony-aspirant state. As a Tigrayan he was regarded as counter-productive for the aims of the ruling elite and historic amnesia was used as a tactic to deny him credit. (Abbay, 2004: 596f)

⁷ Ernest Renan’s held his speech, named “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?” at the Sorbonne in 1882. Until now his path breaking analysis and its theoretical and historical context justifies to deal anew with Renan’s political thoughts. It becomes even more present taking the actuality of the discourse about national identity into consideration. (Euchner, 1995: 7)

4.2.3.3. Centripetal versus Centrifugal Forces

By choosing the assimilationist path the absolutist state was able to build up Amhara supremacy within the empire of Ethiopia. Moreover, it enhanced the centripetal forces while weakening the centrifugal tendencies of the other ethnic elites by obtaining the control of most of the country's political and economic institutions. The Amhara had enjoyed their primacy in state-building since the Shewan king Menelik came into power in 1889. In addition Addis Ababa emerged as the political, economic and cultural centre of Ethiopia. Wherever occurrences of modernity took place, the Amhara were its primary beneficiaries. The public policy favoured economic and educational investments in Shewa and the other Amhara regions. (Rothchild, 1997: 77) These unequal opportunities and the huge differences in living standards all over the country lead to further centrifugal inclinations which then prepared the ethno-regional landscape for conflict. (Markakis, 1987) Moreover the economically weakened and marginalized ethnic groups were underrepresented in the political process. The bureaucracy was mainly dominated by Amhara elites. Amharic as the official language became the "language of power" and limited public participation basically to the dominant group. (Rothchild, 1997: 77)

Continuing Menelik's political path, Emperor Haile Selassie (1930-1974) pursued a policy of modernization. Modernization itself is a strong force which can either undermine or strengthen the bases of nationalism. His aim was to create a strong centralized nation where education was perceived as the means to achieve this goal. He selectively chose sons of the traditional elites to attend boarding schools in Addis Ababa and introduced important institutions like the parliament. By appointing members from the provincial elites and keeping them in the capital, he effectively undermined their political power back home in the provincial areas. (Gashaw, 1993: 145)

Open resistance within the powerful state was risky, therefore acquiescence was preferred. Even though the ground and the richness of resources for ethnic mobilization existed, neither economic nor political grievances led to a nationalist insurgency. This situation changed when the absolute regime of Haile Selassie was overthrown in 1974,

the leading elites lost their power and the state institutions were weakened. As a result, the marginalized ethnic groups increased their awareness on the communal level and began to engage in the starting competition for power. A revolutionary situation had been created. The political landscape created a situation where ethno-regional movements such as the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Marxist Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) could gain members, influence and power. Soon, the EPRP disputed the legitimacy of the military junta, the *Derg*. (Abbay, 2004: 598)

4.2.4. The Secessionist Policy

4.2.4.1. Secessionist Movement in Eritrea

In 1890, Eritrea was carved out of the Ethiopian empire by Italian colonialism, awaiting a UN decision on its fate while being under British trusteeship during the 1940s. Political leaders embraced the unionist ideology of reuniting Eritrea again with Ethiopia by following the slogan "Ethiopia or Death". While Ethiopia followed an autocratic system led by Emperor Haile Selassie, British Eritrea (1941-52) was introduced to a rudimentary understanding of democracy with freedom of press, press, elections and unionization of labour and a multi-party parliamentary political system. Finally Eritrean politicians accepted a federal relationship and Eritrea successfully merged with Ethiopia in 1952. Meanwhile political entrepreneurs were using and manipulating identity for their own advantage. Soon after Ethiopia started counteracting the federal arrangement to the dismay of Eritrean politicians, an important opportunity was missed when the peaceful demand for restoration of the federation passed unheeded with the result of a war of independence, lasting for thirty years. For Eritrea, the negotiable demand for restoration soon turned into a non-negotiable demand for independence. (Abbay, 2004: 600f)

The armed struggle for secession began in the year 1961. The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) monopolized the custodianship of nationalism with the aim to make history serviceable for its goals. In contrast to their Tigrayan co-ethnics who could

build up an identity on a rich past, Eritreans had no distinct political community and shared history to recall. As a result Eritrea appeared disperse without the moral basis for statehood. And still political actors followed the idea that a shared memory is the basis for a collective identity and therefore tried to revisiting the past. Historical facts and figures which did not help to construct a distinct ethnic identity were simply ignored. After all, the creation of a nationalist ideology out of inventing history failed because the pre-modern antecedents who remained in popular memory were not compatible with the community imagined by the EPLF. Because of the fact that the ethnic past was not serviceable for the secessionist ambitions of the political entrepreneurs, the colonial boundary that Italy created (1890-1941) became Eritrea's sole *raison d'être*. (Abbay, 2004: 601f)

After 1991 and particularly in 1994, Eritrea had a unique chance to succeed in the difficult task to build up an efficient democracy for its people. Its popular resistance movement was based on the overwhelming support and solidarity of the people. Democratic practice was experienced when recognizing that they stood for one cause and realizing that only together they could win the struggle against the militarily highly superior Ethiopian force. They saw themselves willing to subordinate their individual wishes and needs to the victory of their struggle for freedom. The alternative was an endless suppression and suffering for all Eritreans. Therefore it appeared natural that the trusted leaders, with Essayas Afewerki at the forefront, who guided the Eritrean People's Liberation Front to victory, would also become the first leaders of the independent Eritrean state. By 1995, however, Essayas could not easily adjust to the spirit of freedom the people expected. Obviously the "Eritrean Nation" was not as united and homogenous as the political leaders had wished them to be. (Pausewang, 2005: 165f) Already in 1993, observers from outside had noted a "democratic deficit" in Eritrea, arguing that "organized opposition is still not allowed in Eritrea, and individuals who might have wanted to oppose it, would have had reasons to fear for the consequences if they wanted to move to Eritrea and register a campaign against independence." (Pausewang/Suhrke, 1993: 38)

4.2.4.2. The Parallel Development in Ethiopia and Eritrea

Certain developments such as the process of democratization went parallel in Ethiopia and Eritrea. In both countries democratic laws and political intentions were promulgated, but in practice, their systems appeared less democratic because the protection of positions and preservation of power of the leading groups always had priority over human and democratic rights of the citizens. Already in 1992, when the first local elections were held in Ethiopia, the EPRDF, although it had invited all ethnic resistance groups and representatives to participate in the transitional government, did not open the political space for the OLF. Many party members, election helpers, and families, supporting the OLF were exposed to serious threats and harassments. (Pausewang, 2005: 168f)

Regarding the issue of nationalities, Ethiopia and Eritrea had diametrically opposed solutions. In the case of Eritrea, the new government declared that thirty years of war had formed one strong nation of Eritreans irrespective of ethnic origin and diversity. Contrarily, Ethiopia gave all its “nations, nationalities and peoples” first the right to self-administration (in the transitional Charter) and later on the right to self-determination up to secession as defined in the Constitution of 1994. It has chosen an approach of ethnic politics to unite the different ethnic communities under a greater Ethiopian state without discrimination and fear of “the other”. But options are logic and could have worked out in case they would have been applied with democratic openness and accountability. In Ethiopia, the political leaders saw themselves endangered to become a minority and loose their power once ethnic identity should unite the Oromo, the largest ethnic groups, in one political block. In Eritrea the aspired policy could hardly work out since the country was ethnically too diverse, for example, when so many returnees from the Sudan after the war were resettled in the Kunama area, that the Kunama people living there feared to lose their ethnic identity as well as their access to farm land. Moreover, the Afar people of the north barely could understand why they were simply considered Eritreans, whereas over the border in Ethiopia, the Afar people there had their own state with own administration, radio station and schools teaching their kids in Afar language. (Pausewang, 2005: 169)

4.2.4.3. Oromo Nationalism

The Oromo⁸ people are one of the most numerous ethnic groups in Africa. On the whole continent, there are far more than 25 million people who consider themselves as belonging to the Oromo national identity speaking the Oromo language as their mother tongue. Except of a relatively small number of pastoralists living in Kenya, all their homelands lie in Ethiopia, where they make up around 35 per cent of the whole population. The knowledge of the Oromo history and culture and social organization is marked by huge gaps and white spots. Although different Oromo groups vary considerably in their local organizations and modes of subsistence, they share similar cultures and social values. A pan-Oromo consciousness and a common sense of national identity arose only recently but is growing steadily. (Baxter, 1996: 7)

As mentioned above the self-government of the Oromo was brought to an end abruptly during and after the 1860s, when the dominant Amhara under Menelik created the Abyssinian Empire which soon was to constitute the modern Ethiopian empire. The conquest and annexation of their territory deprived the Oromo of their sovereignty as well as of their history. The creation of the empire consolidated myths and untruths which were, at that time, circulating in the Christian kingdom about the Oromo, generally portraying them as people without history. (Hassen, 1990: 1) The Oromo identity was undermined by attacking their institutions and symbols. Political and religious institutions of the Oromo were suppressed and their offices ceased to exist. Those Oromo leaders who survived the conquest were deprived of power and status. To maintain their identity they had to find active and passive forms of resistance. As an instrument of passive resistance, many people used religion to maintain boundaries between themselves and the dominant Abyssinians (Amhara) who were Orthodox Christians. (Bulcha, 1996: 55)

Whether they became Muslims or Christians, the Oromo religious belief remained their traditional religion. Even though they were forced to convert, most of the rituals continued to be practiced. Regarding the traditional Oromo political culture it has to be

⁸ In older literature they are often called Galla. (Baxter, 1996: 7)

mentioned here that much of the ritual and social symbols and values of the so called “*gada*”⁹ system continued to operate, and even now *gada* constitutes a shared political idiom. (Bulcha, 1996: 56)

Regarding various sources the Oromo people were depicted as scattered tribal groups who lacked the core features necessary to form a nation. Ernest Gellner (1983: 84) once wrote: “The Oromo were to be seen as an enormous population of Adams and Eves, from whom the apple of ethnicity had as yet been withheld, and who were familiar only with the rudimentary fig leaf of age-set organization.” The Amhara ruling elites aimed to undermine Oromo national identity and unity grounding on the fear that the development of Oromo nationalism would lead to a disintegration of the Ethiopian Empire. The ruling elites of the Somali on the other side undermined the Oromo national identity because they thought that the growth of Oromo nationalism would abort the realization of the dream of Greater Somalia. Whereas Amhara feared their empire endangered, the Somali were scared by the birth of Oromo nationalism itself. (Hassen, 1996: 67f)

Since its birth in the 1960s, the Oromo nationalism was confronted by intense opposition from Ethiopia and Somalia. This not only hindered the development of Oromo nationalism but also made it different from other forms of nationalism on the African continent. (Hassen, 1996: 67) Paul Baxter drew a line between nationalism and colonial rule when saying that Oromo nationalism differs from other forms of nationalism in the sense that the experience of Ethiopian rule differed from that of being ruled by a Western colonial power. The Ethiopian state power was centred in the country itself and not in some metropole overseas. Further, the rulers were native and did neither have immense superiority over the ruled nor enjoy a vastly superior standard of living. (Baxter, 1994: 249 cit. Hassen, 1996: 68)

⁹ One of the principles of the *gada* system was and is to maintain a united strength against outsiders and peaceful consensus, called *naga*, within. (Baxter, 1990: 236 cit. Bulcha, 1996: 51) Different *gada* federations form many *duula* together against enemies from outside. The solidarity and unity which marked these coalitions to defend Oromo territory and its inhabitants can be seen as reflections of the proto-nationalist feeling among the Oromo population, which has existed for many centuries and nowadays turns into a full-fledged nationalism. (Bulcha, 1996: 51f)

Meanwhile Amhara and Somali undermined the Oromo national identity and perpetuated the myth of non-existence of that identity; the Oromo claim for national identity was aimed at equality of treatment among the people in Ethiopia. Like other African nationalisms, the Oromo one also emerged and developed in response to colonial rule. Its aim is to fight against political and cultural dominance, in case of the Oromo against domination by the Amhara, and partly against Somali expansionism. For the Oromo people on the other side, neither Ethiopian rule based on inequality, economic exploitation, cultural subjugation and political domination nor the prospect of Greater Somalia were considerable for their future. (Hassen, 1996: 68)

The awakening of nationalism can be described as a long and slow process mediated by national awakening or national consciousness. It has emerged as a result of several factors: the spread of modern education, better communication, improved transportation systems, proliferation of mass media and press, higher literacy rates and the growth of literature and intensive interaction among people, all which leads to the development of national consciousness. In the Oromo case there was no western educated elite to lead a nationalist movement. (Hassen, 1996: 69)

Instead, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) claims the custodianship of Oromo ethnic nationalism. So far, their success regarding the mobilization of Oromo people into an ethnic war has been limited. The Oromo group occupies a huge landmass, most of them are pastoralists. What they miss is the powerful sources of collective identity such as imperial political myths and prior forms of organization. Another problem they face in this sense is that they do not possess literacy with a standardized script which could have stored cultural resources and memory. Further the Oromo are a relatively heterogeneous group which is not united by a common interest or purpose. The lack of communication hinders commercial intercourses and therefore a shared common economic life. Their various clans are not united in a pan-Oromo collective memory. Historically there is no tradition of a common struggle and warfare as a community against opponents. As a result, vital components such as history mythology and memories, heroes and sacred sites to build up a common ethnic identity, are missing. As a matter of fact, Oromia as the concept of national home lacks sentimental value. (Abbay, 2004: 602f)

The centralist Ethiopian leaders did not pay attention to the ethnic particularities of the Oromo; instead they subjected them to amharanization. Despite the immense economic, political and cultural disadvantages the Oromo faced within the greater state, the Oromo masses so far have not responded enthusiastically to the invitation by the OLF to fight a secessionist war. A reason for that can be that the possibility of secession has never appeared attainable for the collective of the Oromo. They were convinced that Oromo nationalism could not weaken the state's power to such an extent that the balance of power would disfavour the state. Nowadays, the new government under the EPRDF respects ethnic diversity and is building up a system which accommodates Oromo cultural concerns. In this context, the Afaan Oromo became an academic and administrative language. (Abbay, 2004: 603f)

4.2.5. The 'Accommodationist' Option: Tigray, 1991 onwards

Contrary to the Oromo, the predominant inherently discriminatory economic, cultural and political conditions under the Derg military junta nourished Tigrayan ethnic nationalism. Prevailing state violence made it easier for the Tigrayan political entrepreneurs under the TPLF - which could also rely on a Tigray's rich dynasty past - to mobilize people to an ethnic nationalist insurgency from 1974-91. (Abbay, 2004: 605f)

After the civil war that ravaged Ethiopia for 30 years and the breakdown of Mengistu Haile Mariam's regime the competing guerrilla bands achieved a relative peace and joined in a transitional government. On the top of the movement was the newly announced Prime Minister Meles Zenawi who has been quoted in the Time Magazine (4th Nov 1991: 47) as saying: "A feudal monarchy and a repressive dictator couldn't hold Ethiopia together. Now we are trying another way. If Ethiopia breaks apart, then it wasn't meant to be." With regard to Eritrea and its secession, the TPLF-dominated EPRDF preferred a policy that devolves power to the various ethnic communities within the multi-ethnic state. The newly established federal system opposes both unitary and assimilation policies. From now on, ethnic groups, as masters of their own House (of Federations), have been in charge of their own domestic economy, administration,

education and security policy. The aim of the government was to construct a system within a greater Ethiopia where the distinct ethnic groups can develop a shared feeling of belonging in a sense that they all and voluntarily are part of the state's household and that they have their equitable access to power safeguarded. (Abbay, 2004: 607f) In this regard, Walker Conner (2002: 31) examines that the essence of self-determination is "precisely about having the choice to secede, not actual secession per se."

Ethnic federalism in Ethiopia appears as a form of consociationalism following the principle of power-sharing among ethnic leaders at a federal level, balanced recruitment, and proportional resource allocation. (Lijphart, 1977: 25) It has to be mentioned here that the political representatives are not restricted to their respective regional state but also contribute to the federal government policies. Still, since the gap between society and state remains wide, the current political system can hardly be recognised as democratic. Regarding the construction of a common nationwide identity, shared suffering experiences seem to be more potent than shared glory and national proud.

4.2.6. Multi-ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia

After the collapse of the military rule in 1991, the new political leaders installed a federal system which was largely based on ethnic territorial units.¹⁰ The main purpose of this state-building process was to achieve ethnic and regional autonomy, while maintaining the Ethiopian state. The question which appeared at that time of Ethiopian history was whether the political choice for constructing a system based on multi-ethnic federalism would lead to peace and prosperity or, as many opponents feared, or if it would invite ethnic conflict and therefore risks state disintegration. (Ottaway, 1994 cit. Habtu, 2005: 313)

¹⁰ The regional states which were formed are: (1) Tigray, (2) Afar, (3) Amhara, (4) Oromia, (5) Somali, (6) Benishangul-Gumuz, (7) Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (a voluntary merger of five regional states), (8) Gambella, (9) Harari; later, (10) Addis Ababa and (11) Dire Dawa were put under federal jurisdiction. (see map, chapter 4.1.1. Ethnic diversity and the Ethiopian State)

Even though Ethiopia is denominated a Federal Democratic Republic it is de facto a one-party state within ethnic organizations that are satellites of one ethnic organization, the TPLF, which itself is the leading force in the multi-ethnic ruling coalition of the EPRDF. Supporters of the system claim that the multi-ethnic federalism as it exists until now has so far maintained unity among the Ethiopian peoples and the territorial integrity of the state, while at the same time providing the right of ethnic self-determination. (Habtu, 2005: 314)

The argument the EPRDF's and TPLF's leader and Ethiopia's Prime Minister Meles Zenawi brought up to justify the introduction of ethnic federalism was that all they were trying to do was to stop the war, and to prevent a new one from erupting. Therefore "ethnic federalism was the only way of democratically restructuring the country, enhancing the political participation of the Ethiopian population and giving ethno-regional rights to the previously oppressed peoples or nationalities". (Meles Zenawi cited in Vaughan, 2004)

Further, the EPRDF promoted ethnic federalism as the response to the legacy of the ethnic domination and marginalisation in the history of the Ethiopian state and the need for a state reconstruction that delegitimized the old leadership elites. (Abbink, 1995 cit. Aalen, 2006: 245) Another aim of federalism, besides maintaining unity and preventing war, was to overcome the Amhara hegemony and include historically marginalised groups into the political process - if only under the tutelage of EPRDF - by establishing ethnically based local administrations. (Young, 1998: 196) The magic formula was decreasing the demand for succession by increasing self-government. (Hechter, 2000: 142)

Christopher Clapham (1988: 2-5) points out that during Emperor Haile Selassie (1931–1974) and the military Marxist regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam and the Derg (1974–1991), ethnic groups, cultures and languages were clearly ranked and ethnic movements oppressed. Since the establishment of the modern Ethiopian state at the end of the 19th century, inequality between ethnic groups has been part of governance, with the Amhara being perceived as the ruling group. To gain a political function or a job in the state

administration, the adoption of Orthodox Christianity and the Amharic language was a necessity. The Ethiopian national identity was simply linked to the Amhara.

The opposition side against the introduction of ethnic-based federalism in Ethiopia argued that establishing political and territorial units along ethnic lines leads to a “re-tribalization” of the country. (Mazrui, 1994: 60) Moreover Marina Ottaway (1994, cit. Teshome/Záhorik, 2008: 9) claims that ethnic-based federalism increases ethnic conflicts rather than minimizing them. One of the harshest critic is Samuel Huntington (1993: 15 cit. Teshome/Záhorik, 2008: 10) who said that the “attempt to classify people by ethnic background is reminiscent of practices which used to exist in the former Soviet Union and in South Africa. It seems totally contrary to a political process with one of its purposes being the promotion of a common Ethiopian national identity. It also seems inappropriate in a country in which substantial portions of the population are of mixed ethnic background or unsure of which ethnic group they belong to or wish to identify with.”

Following the argumentation of Brietzke (1995) and Merera (2003) many opponents of the federal system feared the disappearance of the Ethiopian state from the political world map. In this context Edmond Keller examines “whether one agrees or disagrees with Ethiopia's strategy of ethnic federalism, the process of constructing it will not be easy. In spite of the fact that international donors tend to accentuate the positives in this approach, there are no prior examples of success in establishing a purely ethnically based system of federalism.” (2002: 33) As examples he mentions Canada - Quebec as a special case, Switzerland where discrete ethno-linguistic groups generally inhabit cantons but where the federal system does not operate according to an ethnic construct and the Indian federalism, characterized by some ethnically pure states whereas others are not organized on the basis of ethnicity. (Keller, 2002: 33) Another argument is that the TPLF designed ethnic federalism as “divide and rule” policy in order to strengthen its own position.

Alem Habtu (2005, 317) concludes: “The constitutional marrying of political pluralism and the right of secession makes Ethiopia’s multi-ethnic federalism virtually unique.”

For Lahra Smith (2007: 565) “ethnic federalism is a unique and controversial attempt to account for the contested nature of ethnic identities in contemporary Ethiopian politics through a variety of mechanisms (...).” As an example for “voting for an identity” she mentions a unique referendum on ethnicity in the year 2001, where the Siltie, formerly considered a sub-clan of the Gurage ethnic group, were asked by the House of Federation, whether they wanted to separate or stay with the Gurage. Laying a decision concerning the boundaries and content of ethnicity in the hands of ordinary citizens is kind of an unusual political manoeuvre. Some may call it inherently democratic since the referendum followed democratic procedures and results were accepted by all major parties. On the other hand side it can be seen as an inappropriate politicisation of ethnicity resulting from the divisive institutional structure of ethnic federalism. Therefore “the Siltie referendum” can be characterized as “a critical test of the power-sharing potential of federalism in the context of ethnic conflict and contested identity claims.” (Smith, 2007: 566)

4.2.7. The Role of Religion and the Multi-ethnic System

First of all it has to be mentioned that Islam and Christianity and religion itself have shaped identities and histories in the Horn of Africa. Nowadays movements of modern nationalism and ideas of social revolution try to enter the social sphere as new and comprehensive ideologies for Ethiopia and its neighbour countries, therefore religiosity as driving force. (Erlich, 2010: 193)

After years of suppression and weakness, Ethiopian Christianity nowadays gains more and more relevance. At the time of Haile Selassie the church was detached from its Egyptian roots and turned into a fully dependent branch of his government. Later on, in the 1960s the Ethiopian Orthodoxy became increasingly identified with the backwardness of the imperial regime. In the time from 1974-1991, Mengistu considered Christianity as “opium for the masses” and therefore deprived the church of its economic infrastructure, systematically harassing its leaders. With the establishment of the federal system in 1991 and the opening of the country, Christianity could recuperate. Its norms

and beliefs are being re-examined and readdressed by a new generation, due to an intensive interaction with other churches in Ethiopia and the Ethiopian diaspora. Christianity is widely reconceived as a guardian of Ethiopian identity against the widely perceived Islamic assault. (Erich, 2010: 194f)

The popular Islam in Sudan and Somalia as well as in Ethiopia itself expanded through the connection to the Middle East and the Arab Islam. It is questionable whether Christianity or Islam will be the driving force in the future development of the country. To avoid religion-based conflicts, it is unavoidable to redefine the Christian-Muslim relations. It has to be mentioned here that though most of the Ethiopians focus their attention on the ever sensitive ethnic dimension and on the flaws in the democratization process, the issue of how Muslims are being integrated in the redefined Ethiopian state is no less important. But how to incorporate Islam in the state structures equally? One option implies that Ethiopia will open its economy to the rich Middle East and further speed up progress in other fields. Therefore the support of the Christians would be necessary. The other option would be the opposite toward missing these opportunities, which in the worst case could lead to internal conflicts. (Erich, 2010: 195f)

4.2.8. The Notion of Ethnic Majority and Minority in Ethiopia

The minorities' rights are guaranteed by Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966:

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.

Minority rights under Art. 27 alternate between being a mere extrapolation from the individual rights of members of minority groups and being a genuinely collective right. The formulations in terms of individual rights ('persons belonging to such minorities...') and its association in international jurisprudence with notions of equality and non-

discrimination, shows that minority rights are not necessarily collective rights. This has to be especially considered when it comes to the issue of 'minorities of minorities'. If minority rights are seen genuinely collective, then dissenting members of minority groups can be compelled to follow the rule of the 'minority majority' of the group. The situation is comparable to dissenting members of 'peoples' with a right to self-determination which can be compelled to accept a certain form of self-government chosen by the majority of that 'people'. (Crawford, 1988: 60)

One of the big challenges Ethiopia faces concerning its federal system, based on the concept of ethnicity, is the politics of ethnicity taking it for granted that every ethnic group is homogenous, unified and speaks with one voice. That is not the case in Ethiopia. Even though the Constitution from 1994 grants a wide range of rights, subgroups, historically marginalized minorities within the various ethno-linguistic groups, have not received any particular consideration during the creation process of the Constitution and therefore do not have the right of special representation under the ethnic federal system. (Aalen, 2011: 127)

After two decades of federal experience in Ethiopia one can observe that a major challenge lies within the issue of local tyranny at the constituent unit level. In contrast to recent developments in some federations on the status of local governments, according to the Ethiopian tradition local governments are at the discretion of their regional states, a fact that puts the tenuous issue of the position of minorities within each regional state onto the political agenda. The notion of ethnic majority and minority in the Ethiopian federal context seems confusing. Based on the assumption that the concept of majority is understood to be a numerical majority dominating a certain political process, none of the nationalities themselves constitute a majority at the federal level. The constitution seems to transform every nationality into a majority by granting them a regional 'mother state' or a local government whereas it is obvious that only the bigger ethnic groups are concerned. The Oromo for example constitute the biggest ethnic group but compared to the total number of Ethiopian citizens they are far less than fifty per cent. As a result, one can conclude that the absence of numerical majority in the political decision-making

process at the centre explains the persisting regime instability, the interethnic tensions and the control of power. (Fiseha, 2008: 47f)

On the constituent unit level (smaller units under the regional states) two notions of majority and minority are emerging. In five of the nine states (Oromia, Amhara, Tigray, Afar and Somali) the ethnic groups to which the regional states' names refer, constitute the majority which dominates the political process whereas all the other ethnic groups living in the same regional state are minorities without any bigger influence. The situation in the two city states of Harar and in Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz is different because the numerical majority remains a political minority in terms of its influence in the decision-making process.¹¹ To conclude, on this level the notion of majority and minority seems to be reversed from the ordinary understanding of the concept as described above. (Fiseha, 2008: 48)

It becomes obvious that the problem within the function of the regional state is that, the dominant ethnic groups whether numerical, or according to their level of political influence, consider themselves as the owners of a certain regional state. As a result, other citizens of different ethnic communities or those who do not identify themselves with any ethnic group do not have a place, which certainly contradicts the constitutional provisions that guarantee to work and live in the place of one's choice. Hardly surprising new conflicts are predestined.¹² The conflicts in Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz concerning the individual citizens' right to live and work in a place of his or her own choice are a result of the political failure to enforce constitutional stipulated principles. The Constitution makes clear that "every Ethiopian has the right to engage freely in any economic activity and to pursue a livelihood of his or her choice anywhere within the national territory" (see Art. 41). The Constitution imposes an obligation on all branches of government, both on the federal and on the constituent unit level, to respect and enforce the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in it. But in reality the emphasis on self-rule (of dominant groups) and collective rights seem dominant and omnipresent.

¹¹ In the Harar state, the Harari only constitute 7% of the total population but play a political key role compared to other bigger ethnic groups in this state. The same scenario occurs in the other two city states.

¹² Especially in Oromia, frequent conflicts between the Oromo and the Amhara minority have led to loss of life and destruction of property over the time.

Moreover, the necessary institutions for enforcing human rights are not existent or working properly. (Fiseha, 2008: 48f)

4.2.9. Multi-ethnic federalism in a Comparative Perspective

After World War II and with the beginning of decolonization, the newly established countries in Africa tried to create viable national states through the organization of different ethnic groups within the territorial boundaries inherited from the prior colonialism. France was then the model of a national state associated with modernity and progress whereas ‘tribalism’ and ‘ethnicism’ were related to backwardness. Therefore many African states followed the nation-state model by attempting to create a unified nation out of disparate people. The Ethiopian experiment is different in the sense that they unified the state on basis of ethnic federalism and even more intriguing because Ethiopia is one of the oldest states in the world and has never been colonized. (Habtu, 2005: 315)

Especially in the 1960s state nationalism became an important political power in Africa. The state nationalist’s aim was to undermine ethnic nationalism, which was at that time seen as an obstacle to modern state formation. Anthony Smith describes ethnic nationalism as a consequence of the development or politicization of ethnic consciousness by an ethnic community. (Smith, 1996) As an exemption Ethiopia chose multi-ethnic federalism as the political basis for the modern state and encourages political parties to organize along ethnic lines. Two more, non-Western countries, which follow a federal system, are Nigeria and India. From Nigeria’s independence in 1960 on, the federal system consisted of three regions, each of it inhabited by a dominant ethnic group. During the Biafra war of secession in 1967, Nigeria split up into twelve states. In 1996 already thirty-six states existed. In contrast to the Ethiopian system, the Nigerian federalism is not ethnically based in structure and objection. (Suberu, 2001: 3-9) India, on the other hand side, was reorganized along ethno-linguistic lines from 1956 onwards. To prevent secessionist tendencies, a constitutional amendment was passed in 1963. (Connor, 1994: 27) It can be said that Indian federalism has a strong bias in favour of

central authority. The structure of the newly established system was transformed within a few years into a genuine, language-based federation designed to accommodate the aspirations of subnational groups for autonomy and self-determination. (Turton, 2006: 8) In contrast to the Ethiopian Constitution, the Indian Constitution does not give its states the right of secession on the ground that the “union is indestructible”. The other powers are vested in the Union, whereas according to the Ethiopian Constitution, they are vested in the regional states (see Art. 52 of the Ethiopian Constitution). (Habtu, 2005: 316)

In the communist world, the USSR and Yugoslavia passed constitutional arrangements which recognized the right to ethnic self-determination and secession. In 1974, Yugoslavia consisted of five nations but Marshal Tito organized the federal system in a way that no clear correspondence between ethnic territories and the various nations existed. (Denitch, 1994 cit. Habtu, 2005: 316) Regarding the federalism in USSR, Meles Zenawi said “in the former Soviet Union, they did have this right [of secession] written in the Constitution, but there, it was the prerogative of the Party, still more the Party boss.” (Constitutional Commission of the Transitional Government) For decades, the Soviet regime had created conditions which led to a transformation of ethnic nationalism into state nationalism. When comparing Ethiopia to the two communist states, Alem Habtu (2005: 317) examines three distinctions: (1) Even though the secession clause is provided by the Constitution of both countries, USSR and Yugoslavia, the collapse can be far more ascribed to communism than to the secession provision. (2) Whereas Communist parties controlled the politics of ethnic autonomy, there is no leading Communist Party in Ethiopia. (3) The Ethiopian Constitution provides political pluralism, which the other one does not. Also for Roeder (1991) the policy of Soviet federalism was the reason for the disintegration of the Union that later on led to the emergence of independent post-soviet states. Also in Yugoslavia, federalism prepared the ideal conditions for conflicts which ended up in the collapse and disintegration of the two states.

In contrast, Teshome and Záhorik (2008: 13) point out that federalism and political decentralization can also contribute to the reduction of ethnic conflicts. One good example in this regard is most probably Canada – Quebec, where federalism helps

solving secessionist movements. Further Aalen (2006: 244) argues that although federalism is criticized for encouraging or not avoiding the self-determination of certain ethnic groups, which further can lead to secession unless the idea of a common citizenship is propagated and encouraged simultaneously within the federal state.

In Ethiopia many people are angry at the ruling EPRDF because of their officials' failure to propagate and encourage the idea of common citizenship in the federal country. After 1991, people who profess "Ethiopianness" instead of their ethnic origin were persecuted as Amhara radicals, or "Neftegnas" (lit. "gun-carriers"). Ironically, it was the "Neftegnas" as warriors of Menelik II's government who preserved Ethiopia's independence and territorial integrity during the time of foreign invasion. The Ethiopian "Neftegnas" can therefore be compared with the Japanese "Samurai." (Teshome/Záhorik, 2008: 13)

4.3. Legal Background

4.3.1. The Constitution of Ethiopia

Instead of creating a constitutional monarchy, Haile Selassie's Constitutions of 1931 and 1955 can be described as monarchical constitutions. Thereafter a small Amhara elite obtained patronage, including access to land, office, etc. meanwhile all effective power remained in the hands of Haile Selassie. The soldiers who performed the coup against the Emperor in 1974 constituted themselves as a revolutionary (120-member) parliament: the *Derg* or *Dergue*. Slowly the most ruthless soldiers started to dominate the others within the Derg and their leader was Mengistu Haile Mariam who eventually established a Stalinist regime. Mengistu's Constitution of 1987 had its roots in 1983 with the establishment of the Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities. Throughout this Constitution, a regional administrative autonomy but no meaningful political or ethnic autonomy had been created. Mengistu's governance was universalist and unitarist, visible through "popular" mobilizations where masses were to be emancipated from their nationalities as well as their class. (Brietzke, 1995: 19f)

Weakened by the guerrilla war in Eritrea and by the withdrawal of the Soviet support, Mengistu's power was overthrown by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in May 1991. The following transitional government was dominated by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) which was controlled by the TPLF and its leader Meles Zenawi. Although the EPRDF defeated the Derg and restored order in most areas, it has remained a de facto military regime which de jure operates as a civilian government. (Brietzke, 1995: 20)

The constitution-making under the EPRDF government in 1994 has little in common with the bargaining, trade-offs, and compromises that usually typify such processes. Instead it reflects the weakness of the country's democratic institutions. The political objectives of the governing party and its position of dominance within a state were crucial to the creation of the new Constitution. Political opposition, on the other side, had been crushed or marginalised. (Young, 1998: 195)

4.3.2. The Secession Clause in the Constitution

Article 39 of the Ethiopian Constitution proclaims that “(e)very Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession.” It seems quite interesting that a state like Ethiopia, which consists of numerous different ethnic groups, most of them possessing a strong sense of belonging based on traditions, languages and sometimes even religion, espouses such a progressive approach to self-determination. (Smis, 2008: 107)

The case becomes even more interesting taking into consideration that historically Ethiopia has played an important role in static African view on self-determination. Many African states were obliged to embark on a long process of building a (conscious) nation because they kept the former colonial boundaries whether or not viable states had been maintained. As a matter of political realism African governments agreed that respect for existing European-delineated boundaries should be a guiding principle in inter-African relations. (Kamanu, 1974: 355) Moreover, national symbols were created, history was rewritten and usable myths were invented. Most of the newly independent states interpreted the right to self-determination only as a right to decolonization while at the same time laying the focus on the principles of non-interference and territorial integrity in order to confront any demand that could threaten the young and fragile states. (Smis, 2008: 107)

The ultimate aim of the secession clause, the House of Federation, and the relation between the state and the federal provinces is to ensure a sense of equality for all the ethnic groups within the greater federation of Ethiopia.

4.3.2.1. The Transition Charter and the Secession Clause

Twenty-seven political groups participated in the charter conference in July 1991. According to the preamble of the transition charter “self-determination of all the peoples shall be [one of] the governing principles of political, economic and social life”. Moreover it underlies the necessity to end all ethnic hostilities, heal wounds caused by

conflicts, and create peace and stability. (Transitional Period Charter of Ethiopia, 1991: 1)

The whole Charter and especially Article 2c about the right to self-determination are an important substantive condition for the secession clause in the later adopted Constitution of 1995.

“The right of nations, nationalities and peoples to self-determination is affirmed. To this end, each nation, nationality and people is guaranteed the right to:

- a.) Preserve its identity and have it respected, promote its culture and history and use and develop its language;
- b.) Administer its own affairs within its own defined territory and effectively participate in the central government on the basis of freedom, and fair and proper representation;
- c.) Exercise its right to self-determination of [sic] independence, when the concerned nation/nationality or people is convinced that the above rights are denied, abridged or abrogated.” (Transitional Period Charter of Ethiopia, 1991: 2)

After all there were voices for and against the inclusion of the secession clause. The TPLF and EPRDF insisted on it because otherwise the OLF would not have joined the Transitional Government of Ethiopia and the country would probably have collapsed into a civil war. Also all the Somali parties required the clause as a condition of their participation. The Worker Party of Ethiopia (WPE), many elite members of the dominant Amhara ethnic group and other pan-Ethiopians, including elite members of minority groups were against an inclusion of the clause. As a further output the conference established an 87-member Council of Representatives including representatives of national liberation movements, other political organizations and prominent individuals. The EPRDF had the largest bloc with 32 seats followed by the OLF with twelve seats. The radical turnaround away from the unity policies of the two previous regimes provoked immediate opposition from the pan-Ethiopian nationalist movement. (Habtu, 2005: 324f)

4.3.2.2. The 1995 Constitution and the Secession Clause

After working on the Transition Charter the transitional Council of Representatives established a Constitutional Commission to draft a constitution in 1992. Again, the most controversial issue was the right of secession. The minority position against it argued that Ethiopia is not a colonial empire and that the dividing line is class rather than ethnicity. The majority position in contrast was articulated by Meles Zenawi (then president) who gave four reasons for the establishment of a multi-ethnic federation: (1) “nations, peoples and nationalities are sovereign”; (2) “one of the basic tenets of democracy is the belief that people can decide on what is advantageous to them”; (3) secession should be supported for the sake of peace and stability”; and (4) “we support the idea for the sake of voluntary union.” (Constitutional Commission of the Transitional Government, “Debate on the Draft Constitution,” 5. cit. Habtu, 2005: 326)

After the Draft Constitution was discussed publicly in summer 1994, an elected Assembly, mostly composed of EPRDF members, ratified the federal constitution in December 1994 which came into force in August 1995.

“We the Nations, Nationalities and People of Ethiopia”, as written in the preamble, “Strongly committed, in full and free exercise of our right to self-determination, to building a political community founded on the rule of law and capable of ensuring a lasting peace guaranteeing, a democratic order, and advancing our economic and social development” (Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1994) already states that the sovereign power of the state Ethiopia belongs to all ethnic groups within the country (see Art. 8/1).

The secession clause itself as mentioned below found its place in the Constitution because the major political forces, the TPLF and the EPRDF, had inscribed the right to self-determination in their political programs and objectives which means that there had been simple ideology reasons for its incorporation. They believed that Ethiopia could not persist as it was if they would not include the secession clause. (Habtu, 2005: 326f)

Article 39 “Rights of Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples”, following Article 2c of the transition Charter, establishes procedures for the exercise of the right to secession.

1. Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession.
 2. Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote its culture; and to preserve its history.
 3. Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to a full measure of self-government which includes the right to establish institutions of government in the territory that it inhabits and to equitable representation in state and Federal governments.
 4. The right to self-determination, including secession, of every Nation, Nationality and People shall come into effect:
 - (a) When a demand for secession has been approved by a two-thirds majority of the members of the legislative Council of the Nation, Nationality or People concerned;
 - (b) When the Federal Government has organized a referendum which must take place within three years from the time it received the concerned council's decision for secession;
 - (c) When the demand for secession is supported by a majority vote in the referendum;
 - (d) When the Federal Government will have transferred its powers to the Council of the Nation, Nationality or People who has voted to secede; and
 - (e) When the division of assets is effected in a manner prescribed by law.
- (Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1994)

Even though every ethnic group has the right to secede from the federal state, the exercise of this right, especially by smaller ethnic groups, is most unlikely. Instead larger ethnic groups seek for an upgrade to a regional status, a right which is also provided by the Constitution, because this is where the executive power lies. Article 47/2 reads:

Nations, Nationalities and Peoples within the States enumerated in sub-Article 1 of this article have the right to establish, at any time, their own States.

3. The right of any Nation, Nationality or People to form its own state is exercisable under the following procedures:

- (a) When the demand for statehood has been approved by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Council of the Nation, Nationality or People concerned, and the demand is presented in writing to the State Council;
- (b) When the Council that received the demand has organized a referendum within one year to be held in the Nation, Nationality or People that made the demand;
- (c) When the demand for statehood is supported by a majority vote in the referendum;
- (d) When the State Council will have transferred its powers to the Nation, Nationality or People that made the demand; and
- (e) When the new State created by the referendum without any need for application, directly becomes a member of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. (Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1994)

Nevertheless, in case that an ethnic group is dispersed over more than just one regional state, it is unlikely to be able to exercise its right to secession. In this case it is more likely for an ethnic group to secede from one regional state and join another one. This is also possible within the smaller units named *ketenas* (zones) and *woredas* (districts). Another possibility is again an upgrade from one tier to another one (from district to zone or from zone to regional state). Therefore the same referendum procedure as mentioned above would be necessary. Besides the fact that a secession of any ethnic group is most unlikely, the secession clause has a strong symbolic value. For example, ethnic groups in border regions, especially Somali, consider the secession clause as a

necessary condition for their continued membership in the Ethiopian federal state. (Habtu, 2005: 328f)

The current Constitution makes ethno-regional groups more independent that they have ever been before, whereas the central state plays an essential role as a resource and mechanism of redistribution. (Abbink, 1997: 164)

4.3.2.3. The House of Federation

The establishment of the House of Federation goes together with the secession clause in the Ethiopian Constitution. It is designed to safeguard ethnic self-determination and is thus “composed of representatives of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples”. (Art. 61/1) The House of Federation covers two unique features: (1) it safeguards the rights of all “Nations, Nationalities and Peoples” following the principle that “each Nation, Nationality and People shall be represented in the House of the Federation by at least one member. Each Nation or Nationality shall be represented by one additional representative for each one million of its population.” (Art. 61/2); and (2) it interprets the Constitution. Taking ethnic representation into consideration, the House of Federations is the most important national instrument; it is the House of ethnic groups and not of regional states. (Habtu, 2005: 330)

But one can find certain anomalies. First, even though the total number of ethnic groups counts around 79, not all of them (around 67) are represented in the House of Federation. This means that especially small groups are non-represented and therefore have no influence in the process of decision-making. Second, in the Oromia state only the Oromo are represented in the House of Federation, although there are a few million non-Oromo living in the region. Third, even though the number of Amhara and Oromo in the Harari regional state is much bigger than the one of Harari itself, yet only the Harari ethnic group is represented. The representatives are elected by the State Council of each regional state or directly by the people. (Habtu, 2005: 330)

4.3.2.4. State-Federal Relations

The 1995 Constitution provides considerable executive, legislative, and judicial authority to all regional states. Therefore each of the nine regional states has its own constitution, executive government, legislature, judiciary, police, militia, and flag; chooses the working language and has the right to secession. After the Constitution a further decentralization from a regional state to *ketena* (zone) and *wereda* (district) governments is possible. The main responsibility of the federal government lies within the mediation of the relations among regional states. The relation between the federal government and the regional states itself has so far been very coherent because of the monopoly of power of the multi-ethnic ruling coalition (EPRDF) and its allied ethnic parties. On the other hand, the reality shows that the dominance of the EPRDF limits political pluralism and in a further step questions the viability of the multi-ethnic federalism itself. (Habtu, 2005: 331f)

4.3.3. Human Rights and the Constitution

“The Ethiopian Constitution is also premised on liberal democratic conceptions of community and individual rights.” (Habtu, 2005: 317) The agenda of the EPRDF’s political goal, to materialize the peoples’ political and human rights completely, is led out in the new Constitution of 1994, where human and democratic rights are incorporated among the fundamental principles. (Vestal, 1999: 129) After Article 10:

1. Human rights and freedoms, emanating from the nature of mankind, are inviolable and inalienable.
2. Human and democratic rights of citizens and peoples shall be respected.

Chapter Three of the Constitution enumerates further fifteen human rights like the rights to life, the right of the security of person and the right to liberty. Article 13 explains the scope of application and interpretation of human rights:

1. All Federal and State legislative, executive and judicial organs at all levels shall have the responsibility and duty to respect and enforce the provisions of this Chapter.
2. The fundamental rights and freedoms specified in this Chapter shall be interpreted in a manner conforming to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenants on Human Rights and International instruments adopted by Ethiopia.

Unfortunately many Ethiopians have learned that listed human rights are not actually guaranteeing their protection. The government with its monopoly of power has acted ruthlessly against political opponents and critics of the regime and thereby suppressed the human rights of its citizens. (Vestal, 1999: 130) “Ultimately, in an Ethiopia with a weak civil society, the absence of a tradition of respect for human rights and a history where powerful men and not laws have defined the relationship between subjects (there were no citizens) and the state, the present constitution must be recognised primarily as a

symbol of the new regime and part of an effort to achieve domestic and international legitimacy.” (Young, 1998: 196)

The Constitution as well as the Criminal and Civil Codes prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention, the use of torture and the mistreatment of prisoners. Nevertheless, thousands of critics and members of the opposition have been arrested by the government and treated crucial. All over the country, but especially in outlying regions, security forces harass and detain people without a warrant. Despite the official numbers of the government, the opposition counts around 2000 extrajudicial killings and hundreds disappearances per year from the 1990s onwards. Further, the freedom of expression of the citizens is limited. (Vestal, 1999: 132f) Although guaranteed in the Constitution (Art. 29) which declares that:

1. Everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference.
2. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression without any interference. This right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any media of his choice.
3. Freedom of the press and other mass media and freedom of artistic creativity is guaranteed. (...)

Despite the EPRDF led government adopted international norms of human rights, their adherence in reality appears poorly. Supporters of the regimes often justify it with theories that rights should be sacrificed in favour of order, economic development, or repression. (Vestal, 1999: 137) In fact, “human rights are universal and indivisible. Human freedom is not separate from these: if it’s denied to anyone anywhere, it is therefore denied, indirectly, to all.” (Havel, 1993: 606)

4.3.3.1. Ethiopia and the UN Human Rights Committees

Since 1945 Ethiopia is member state of the United Nations. Following the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948, Ethiopia is further party of six out of seven core human rights treaties, under them the ICERD¹³ (International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination – 1976); the CEDAW (International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women – 1981); the CRC (Convention on the Rights of the Child – 1991); the ICCPR and the ICESCR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – 1993) whereas it has not joined the Optional Protocols on an individual complaint mechanism and on the abolition of death penalty; the CAT¹⁴ (Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment – 1994). The seventh treaty, the ICRMW (International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families) has not been ratified by Ethiopia. The Federal Democratic Republic does not have any reservations under the substantive provisions of any of these conventions but it becomes clear that Ethiopian governments have consistently refused to accept individual complaint mechanisms in front of the United Nations Committees. (Brems, 2008:161ff)

Regarding the reporting mechanism before the UN Committees, Ethiopia has delivered 11 reports compared to 17 which are overdue. Positively one has to say that current activities in the field of human rights do occur and have been reported in 2002 (CEDAW) and 2005 (CRC). The total lack of reporting under the ICCPR, ICESCR (which may be considered the main human rights treaties) and CAT is problematical. (Brems, 2008:163)

¹³ Ethiopia did not make the declaration under Art. 14 of the ICERD which would allow individuals to submit complaints to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

¹⁴ Again it did not make the declaration under Art. 22 that would allow individual complaints.

4.3.3.2. Humanitarian Aid and International Actors

Ethiopia is one of the most aid-dependent countries in the world. In 2009 it received more than US \$ 2 billion. One of the most recent problems is that the major donors have been unwilling to confront the government over its worsening human rights situation. Even though the country slides deeper into repression, the central government uses development aid funding as leverage against the donors who provide it. As a result, many donors fear that the government would discontinue or scale back their aid programs in case they state their human rights concerns.¹⁵ (Human Rights Watch, 2010)

One of the main problems of spending humanitarian aid and working on development projects in Ethiopia is that all the NGOs and donors are extremely dependent on the will and the rules of the Ethiopian federal government. Therefore donor organizations act carefully in order not to jeopardize the relationship to the government and to be able to continue their work, especially taking into consideration that Ethiopia suffers periodically from drought, and therefrom resulting food crisis and famines. Millions of Ethiopians are dependent on food aid.

Also during Ethiopia's election in 2010 the actions of donor organizations and states can be conceived more passive. They solely negotiated with the government to allow them to send election observers. A significant shift in donor policy toward Ethiopia would likely have to be led by the US government, which constitutes Ethiopia's largest donor and most important political ally on the world stage. (Human Rights Watch, 2010)

¹⁵ A exemplify this trend is perhaps one can name the United Kingdom, whose government has consistently chosen to remain silent about political issues and the human rights situation in order to protect its annual £130 million worth of bilateral aid and development programs. (Human Rights Watch 2010)

4.4. Ethiopia's Election 2010

Before looking at the country's election in 2010, I briefly want to examine the key facts of the Ethiopian political and voting system. The current President is Girma Wolde-Giorgis was elected in 2001 and re-elected 2007 by the House of People's Representatives for a term of 6-years. The Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi (TPLF and therefore in the EPRDF) was designated as interim president in 1991 following the previous regime and was then elected in 1995 and further re-elected 2000, 2005 and 2010. He is designated by the party in power following legislative elections. The Federal Parliamentary Assembly is bicameral:

- **House of Federation** (135 seats): Its members are chosen by regional state councils to serve 5-year terms
- **House of People's Representatives** (547 seats): Members are elected by direct popular vote in single-member constituencies using the first-past-the-post (simple majority) system; members serve also 5-year terms. (African Elections Database, 2011)

In order to guarantee free and fair elections, certain basic principles have to be accepted and fully adhered to in the relationship between the political parties, candidates, their supporters and other stakeholders. Mariam Alemayehu (2009a) outlines some pillars of a free and fair election process, namely co-equality, equity, civility, good faith, mutual respect and tolerance. Considering the first principle co-equality, all parties are presumed to be co-equal under the Ethiopian Constitution. This proposition that fundamentally elections are about equal access and participation in the democratic governance process based on the principle of one person, one vote, is consistent with Articles 56, 60 and 72 of the Constitution. (Alemayehu, 2009a)

"In the run-up to the 2010 "election" what we witness is a one-man, one-party dictatorship in which the ruling "EPDRF" party is astronomically "more equal" than all the other opposition parties combined." (Alemayehu, 2009a) In order to guarantee free and fair elections in Ethiopia the ruling party and its leaders must accept, in principle

and in practice, that the opposition political parties are their equals as recorded by law. Equitable principles require that all the parties receive and disseminate information freely, have access to state media on the same terms and conditions as the ruling party, be able to educate and canvass voters, hold meetings, conduct campaigns freely and vigorously engage fellow citizens to exercise their right to vote in an informed manner. (Alemayehu, 2009a)

The second principle civility is abundantly available in Ethiopia. As the 2005 election has demonstrated, political campaigns, debates and discussions were largely focused on the issues and less on leadership personalities. The only question, which comes up, is whether civility is accepted and able to act freely, or if it is suppressed by the single party government. (Alemayehu, 2009a)

Good faith and fair dealing are not really aspired and pursued by the ruling party. The government has a long history of bad faith dealing with opposition parties. The opposition and its members as well as their families are regularly harassed, maltreated or undermined. Respect and tolerance in the context of free and fair elections assumes respect for the rule of law and respect for each other before, during and after the electoral process. Therefore the ruling party must respect the country's constitution and laws and its international treaty obligations which require compliance with basic standards in the conduct of free and fair elections. The issue of respect goes even further to the level of respect for the sovereign verdict of the people in a free and fair election. If the ruling party has no respect for opposition parties and their leaders, and is incapable of competing views, it does not have respect for the citizens themselves. (Alemayehu, 2009a)

After the 2011 Freedom House Rating, Ethiopia got a 6 for political rights and a 6 in civil liberties; its status is declared as "Not Free".¹⁶

¹⁶ Freedom House is an independent watchdog organization that supports the expansion of freedom around the world. It supports democratic change, monitors freedom, and advocates for democracy and human rights through

- Evaluation of the components of freedom;
- Advocacy Freedom House amplifies the voices of those fighting for freedom in repressive societies;

The Freedom House country report on Ethiopia concludes that Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and his Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) sealed their political dominance after their overwhelming victory in the May 2010 general elections. The EPRDF and its allies took all except two seats in the 547-seat Parliament (see the table below). The government continued its repression of independent media through interference with foreign broadcasts and jamming of Voice of America's radio signal. The oppositional political rallies were suppressed, while different NGOs struggled to sustain themselves under restrictive legislation enacted in 2009.¹⁷ (Freedom House, 2011)

In contrast to the 2005 elections, the federal and regional elections 2010 were exclusively controlled by the EPRDF, which can be seen as an obstacle to Ethiopia's already hesitant process of democratization. The whole election campaign was heavily weighted in favour of the ruling party. Observers of the European Union reported the use of state resources for EPRDF campaign activities. (Freedom House, 2011) In this regard, Mariam Alemayehu (2009b) wrote: "Spanish philosopher George Santayana once said, "Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it." Because of Africa's failure to implement reforms, we are ready to restart that cycle, as parliamentary elections are scheduled to take place in Ethiopia in May 2010."

Human Rights Watch (2010) reported that local officials or neighbourhood militia reportedly went from door to door, verifying the registration of residence as members of

• Works directly with democracy and human rights advocates in their own countries and regions. (see <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=265>)

Ethiopia's political rights rating declined from 5 to 6, its civil liberties rating from 5 to 6, and its status from Partly Free to Not Free due to national elections that were thoroughly tainted by intimidation of opposition supporters and candidates as well as a clampdown on independent media and nongovernmental organizations. (Freedom House, 2011)

¹⁷ The space for independent civil society activity in Ethiopia further shrank in 2009. The government passed a new civil society law whose provisions are among the most restrictive of any comparable law anywhere in the world. The law makes any work that touches on human rights or governance issues illegal if carried out by foreign non-governmental organizations. The term "foreign" implicates that more than 10 % of the funding are from sources outside Ethiopia. Most independent human rights work became almost impossible. (Human Rights Watch, 2010)

the EPRDF. Popular means to threaten voters were the menace of losing their jobs, homes, or government services in case they do not vote for the party.

In December 2008 the security forces re-arrested Birtukan Midekssa, who is the leader of the Unity for Democracy and Justice Party, which had begun to build up a grassroots movement already some years ago. The government announced that she would be jailed for life because she had made public remarks that violated the terms of an earlier pardon for alleged acts of treason surrounding the 2005 elections. (Human Rights Watch, 2010)

An electoral code of conduct was agreed between the EPRDF and several leading opposition parties, which can actually be counted as allies of the leading party. Others, including the Forum for Democratic Dialogue in Ethiopia (Medrek) refused to sign it, arguing that much-needed reforms of the electoral board are not considered and the freely report of the media on the election campaign is not guaranteed. The code was enacted as law despite such concerns. The opposition was harshly harassed, meetings were broken up, and candidates were threatened and detained. Ethiopia's most charismatic opposition figure, Birtukan Mideksa, who is the leader of the Unity and Justice Party, remained in prison during the whole election time. She had been convicted of trying to overthrow a constitutional order during the election-related disturbances in 2005. She was later released in October 2010, after seeking an official pardon. Also other oppositional candidates were reportedly attacked and suppressed during the election process. (Freedom House, 2011 / Alemayehu, 2009b)

In July 2010 the Ethiopian government passed a new anti-terrorism law, which gives broad powers to the police. Moreover, it enables harsh criminal penalties to be applied to political protesters and others who engage in acts of nonviolent political dissent. Some of its provisions appear less toward addressing terrorism than toward allowing for a heavy-handed response to public unrests, like the ones following the Ethiopia's 2005 elections. (Human Rights Watch, 2010)

The polling day itself proceeded peacefully and orderly, though monitoring assessments held by the EU and the African Union. The United States commented that the election fell short of international standards while criticizing the limitations placed on

independent observers and the media in the run-up to the vote. In the end, the EPRDF and its allies won all but two of the 547 seats in the lower house. That would mean that out of nearly 30 million voters, 99.6 per cent had chosen the EPRDF or one of its allied parties. The EU and the United States expressed serious reservations about the outcome; meanwhile opposition demands for a rerun were dismissed by the Supreme Court. Meles Zenawi was sworn in for a third term as prime minister at the EPRDF. (Freedom House, 2011)

The 170-strong European Union observation team was led by Thijs Berman who in the end concluded that “(t)his electoral process falls short of certain international commitments”, pointing to the use of state resources to campaign for the EPRDF. The US assistant secretary of state for African affairs, Johnnie Carson, made a similar observation, reporting that over the last 18 months, the government has taken clear and decisive steps that would ensure it would garner an electoral victory. Positively Mr Berman praised the elections for being peaceful and well organised but said the EU had received numerous reports of harassment and intimidation which were of concerns. However, he appraised these shortcomings did not necessarily affect the overall outcome. (BBC News, 2010)

Following are the results of **23 May 2010 House of People's Representatives Election**¹⁸ (African Elections Database, 2011)

Registered Voters 31,926,520
Total Votes 29,832,190 (93.4%)

Party/[Coalition]	Number of Seats (547)
Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front [EPRDF]	499
Somali People's Democratic Party (SPDP)	24
Benishangul-Gumuz People's Democratic Party (BGPDP)	9
Afar National Democratic Party (ANDP)	8
Gambela People's Democratic Movement (GPDM)	3
Argoba People's Democratic Organization (APDO)	1
Harari National League (HNL)	1
Ethiopian Federal Democratic Unity Forum [MEDREK]	1
Independent	1

Political Rights and Civil Liberties

Regarding its election process including the political campaign and the possibilities for opposition movements, Ethiopia cannot be considered as an electoral democracy. Corruption is a significant problem in Ethiopia. According to the Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom, EPRDF officials receive preferential access to credit, land leases, and jobs. The official media are dominated by state-owned broadcasters and government-oriented newspapers. One of the few independent papers in the capital, Addis Neger, closed in 2009, after harassment of the staff through authorities. Even though the Constitution respects religious freedom, religious tensions have risen in recent years. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is quite influential, especially in the north. In the south is a largely inhabited by the Muslim community (mainly of the Somali, Oromo, and Afar ethnic groups). (Freedom House, 2011)

¹⁸ Of the 48 seats not won by Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), 46 were won by parties that are considered allies of the ruling coalition. The EPRDF and its allies won 545 of the 547 seats in the election. The opposition's two seats were won by the Ethiopian Federal Democratic Unity Forum (MEDREK) coalition and an Independent. (African Elections Database, 2011)

Moreover, academic freedom is restricted; universities have been accused by the prime minister of being too close to the opposition, which has resulted in a permanent monitoring of their activities by the government. Freedoms of assembly and association are limited in practice although constitutionally guaranteed. The judiciary is officially independent, but its judgments mainly follow the government's policy. Women are relatively well represented in Parliament, occupying 152 seats in the lower house. Child labour is still a significant problem, particularly in the agricultural sector. Private businesses are limited by a rigid state control of economic life and the prevalence of state-owned enterprises. (Freedom House, 2011)

The next scheduled Presidential election is in 2013, the one for the House of Federation in 2015 and the one for the House of People's Representatives Election in 2015.

5. Ethiopia in a Region of Balance and Power

Most of today's fragile or collapsed states in Africa are a product of colonial nation building. In this context, Marina Ottaway (2002: 17) explains that the greater the difference between the pre-colonial political entities and what the colonial powers tried or actually did impose, the higher the rate of failure.

Rainer Tetzlaff (2008: 101) added another category to the role and situation of African states. Resulting of the current conditions of globalization, Third World countries are divided by the dichotomy of the two categories, those who know and those who own. Ali Masrui, a Kenyan political scientist, pointed out that societies which *own* resources but do not have the necessary know-how to maximize them are likely to lose out to societies which *know*, irrespective of whether the own resources by themselves or not. While Taiwan, South Korea and Mauritius belong to the second group, Africa's larger states like Nigeria, DR Congo, Sudan or Angola belong to the group of the 'owners'. Even though they are rich of natural resources they are counted to the poorest countries in the world, because they do not have the necessary knowledge to transform natural richness in societal wellbeing of the people. This problem is circulation within the scientific community as the "paradox of plenty". (see Basedau/Mehler, 2005 cit. Tetzlaff, 2008: 100) It seems that Africa contains a third category of countries: those which neither have a mentionable amount of natural resources nor the necessary knowledge to make sense of the existing societal potential, including *human capital* and *institutional capital*. (Tetzlaff, 2008: 101)

States in Africa are known for their ethnic diversity and their instability on various levels. The perception of Africa and its states is fed by news about ethnic claims and arising conflicts. From an outer point of view most of the African states seem incapable of handling their ethnic diversity. (Aalen, 2011: 1) In state doctrine and most intellectual discourses of many African states, ethnicity is thoroughly stigmatized. The use of ethnicity as a basis of political organization is banned by many African governments. Ethnic self-assertion, which is usually characterized as "tribalism", is regarded as

subversive, juvenile, and backward. (Young, 1993: 29) But still, ethnic resurgence has become a common phenomenon in many societies, especially in the Third World. Once believed that sub-nationalities or diverse ethnic groups will in time be assimilated into the dominant nationalism, states nowadays find themselves confronted with the fact that ethnic groups do not wither away, nor are they easily assimilated. (Gashaw, 1993: 140)

As a result, African governments use and develop various strategies to manage ethnicity on the political and institutional level and many times they are actors and builders of ethnic politics to prevent or resolve ethnic conflicts in a way that strengthen their own power basis. In this sense ethnic diversity does not appear solely as a problem and a burden for African states but rather is used as an instrument for governments to consolidate its power over the territory and the population. (Aalen, 2011: 1)

The Ethiopian case deviates from the common African pattern by using ethnicity as a core principle of their multi-ethnic federal state. Ethiopian state mythology builds upon a three-thousand-year old history, which forms the basis for an unusual powerful discourse of nationhood. This becomes even clearer since Ethiopia – alone in Africa – uses the term ‘nationality’ for its ethno-linguistic units instead of ‘tribe’ or ‘ethnic group’. (Young, 1993: 29)

Ethiopia can be regarded as the dominant state within the Horn of Africa. Therefore it should be regarded as the main power in its regional environment. In practice, however, this does not appear as simple as one may think. One reason could be that tensions inherent in the composition of Ethiopia itself, spill over into relations with its neighbours, which have their own internal troubles that, vice versa, reach into Ethiopia. Especially the border regions are an area of dispute and inter-ethnic conflicts. The Horn of Africa as a whole has long been a region with a high level of conflicts. The territorial integrity of existing states has been openly contested throughout the history until now. Examples to mention would be Somalia/Somaliland, Eritrea, and southern Sudan, all of them neighbour countries to Ethiopia. (Clapham, 2006: 31)

All governments in the region have not been afraid to intervene in the domestic politics of their neighbours¹⁹. The regional stakes have been greatly raised by Ethiopia's loss of direct access to the sea. As a result, Ethiopia, the most populated landlocked state in the world, has a vital interest in access to a port, which in principle could be attained by any of its six neighbours, but which in practice mainly affects its relations to Djibouti and Eritrea. (Clapham, 2006: 31)

Also religion plays an important role regarding the relationship between the neighbour countries Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia. The histories of the Islamic countries Sudan and Somalia are inseparably connected to neighbouring Christian state as well as to the Ethiopian Muslims. In both parts of Ethiopia, the Christian and the Muslim one, radical Islam of today is powerful enough to have implications for the country, and indeed for the global security. Haggai Erlich (2010: 2) examines two possible ways for the future of the role of religion in the Horn of Africa: First, all the options that Islamic militancy and Christian Ethiopians' siege mentality can work together to inflict misery on the country, the region and beyond. Second, religious legacies of openness and good neighbourliness are equally powerful and can therefore lead to peace and religious tolerance for Muslims and Christians in the region.

In August 2010 the Eritrea-Ethiopia Claims Commission issued its final rulings on monetary damages resulting from the bloody border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea from 1998 to 2000. Until now the two countries remain stuck in an intractable dispute about the demarcation of the heavily militarized frontier. Eritrea continues to play a destabilizing role throughout the Horn of Africa, also through its efforts to undermine and attack the government of Ethiopia. The Eritrean government further pursues a policy of supporting armed opposition groups in Somalia as a way to undermine Ethiopia's support for the country's weak Transitional Federal Government. (HRW, 2010)

The old image of Ethiopia, which once was characterized by stability and continuity rooted in antiquity, has been exploded. In the popular culture of the West, the picture of the dream kingdom turned into a nightmare. Violence remains to be seen throughout the

¹⁹ This practice persists since the Eritrean independence in 1993 and especially since the outbreak of war between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1998. (Clapham, 2006: 31)

region. Besides Oromo national identity, which appears strengthened to the same extent that it is denied and oppressed, within the borders of Ethiopia, the issue becomes even more complex in the case of Eritrea, where identity is expressed in terms of territorial rather than ethnic nationalism. Looking in a broader context, Somalia and Sudan, where ideas of identity, history, and nation have been challenged on the basis of religious, cultural, ethnic, and clan divisions, have both become transformed into regions scarcely believed suffering. (Sorenson, 1993: 191) The conditions in the Horn of Africa are permanently changing – just as Sudan broke up into two independent states in 2011 – which makes a prediction or conclusion about the future picture of the region inappropriate and to a certain extent impossible.

Ethiopia, with a population of some 80 million peoples, its long history as a sovereign Christian state, and its relatively strong and powerful government, remains as one of the most attractive African country for the West. Its importance for the region is also affirmed by the fact that Ethiopia hosts the seat of the African Union in Addis Ababa. (Tetzlaff, 2008: 100) Yet, in recent years, Ethiopia has remained stable while its neighbor to the west, Sudan, has been mired in civil conflict, and to the east, Somalia has become a major challenge for the whole region in the Horn of Africa.

6. Conclusion

Answering the first research question, how the current political structure of the Ethiopian state can be analysed throughout the history, taking into consideration that Ethiopia has never been colonized by the Europeans, I came up with following conclusion:

Ethiopia plays as special role at the Horn of Africa and on the whole African continent. The fact that it has never been colonised has been widely discussed within the scientific community. The question is whether it has to be seen as an advantage for the creation of the modern Ethiopian state, without its borders and policy being influenced by Europeans, or as a disadvantage in regard to its economic development. However, Ethiopia found its way through thousand years of history and until now managed to sustain in its territorial borders and multi-ethnic composition.

The modern Ethiopian history from the last nineteenth century on shows a pool of three mutually exclusive solutions of policy-making. The assimilationist policy under King Menelik II and Emperor Haile Selassie can be assessed as a total failure. The political entrepreneurs manipulated the available primordial elements for their own purpose and fostered ethnic conflicts between the different communities, and at the same time ignored prevailing economic, cultural and political grievances of other ethnic groups. The secessionist path describes the time when Eritreans saw themselves forced to choose secession for their future national development. But unfortunately, so far they have not gain peace or prosperity. The second dimension of the secessionist movement is the one of the Oromo who found themselves incorporated in the Amharanian homogenizing assimilation policy under the centralist government. However, an ethnic war was not favoured by them especially not since the political landscape turned into an 'accommodationist' one from 1991 onwards. The era of the unitary state has come to an end and ethnically and regionally based discrimination on the political, cultural and economic level has widely been repressed.

To deal with the second question about the role that multi-ethnic federalism nowadays play, one has to realize that the transformation of the political structure of Ethiopia since 1991 has been both radical and pioneering. Radical in the way it has introduced the principle of self-determination for federal regional units, which were prior highly centralized; and pioneering in the sense that no other African state and almost no other state in the world has gone further in using ethnicity as its fundamental organizing principle. (Clapham, 2002: 27 cit. Turton, 2006: 1) In order to that, the Ethiopian experiment of ethnic-based federalism should make of great potential relevance to the vivid debate on ethnic diversity within democratic states.²⁰

Answering the question whether the Ethiopian system based on ethnic federalism guarantees peace and security as well as access to the political process of decision making to its “nations, nationalities and people” and therefore constitutes the “right” system for a multi-ethnic state such as Ethiopia, David Turton concludes: First, he does not see any alternative to some form of a federal system for Ethiopia if its future as a multi-ethnic or multination state with democratic institutions should persist. Second, considering the level of internal conflicts, state violence, terror and repression, that characterized Ethiopia in its previous regimes, the structure of Ethiopia as an ethnic federation has been an undeniable success. Third, when measuring the success of federalism in Ethiopia against the essential requirements of a genuinely federal division of power, it becomes obvious that still a far way is to be gone. (Turton, 2006: 1f)

It is true that in multi-ethnic Ethiopia, diversity has been a serious obstacle to state-building. Throughout the history, the process of state building has been chequered with ethnic tensions, squabbles and conflicts. But with the breakdown of the military regime and the establishment of a federal democracy– which indeed so far is only guaranteed on the paper and less in reality - in 1991, a new window opened, giving space to ethnic diversity and opens the political sphere for representatives of all the distinct ethnic groups.

²⁰ David Turton (2006: 1) examines that the Ethiopian federal experiment is widely left out in the international debate about the advantages and disadvantages as well as the function and the worth of federalism – also in regard to the accommodation of ethnic diversity - as basis for the political structure of a country. As a matter of fact, the understanding of the challenges facing the Ethiopian federal system is restricted by the lack of direct comparisons with other cases.

Therefore I would not say that multi-ethnic federalism has helped to create conditions conducive to ethnic conflict and secession. Instead the multi-ethnic federal project has the potential to enhance interethnic harmony based on mutual respect and reciprocity.

Also Van der Beken disagrees with the major argument against ethnic federalism in Ethiopia, which claims that federalism will only lead to further ethnic fragmentation, tensions and conflicts and will thus ultimately result in the demise of the state. Instead he argues that the study of the Ethiopian case demonstrates that the political context at the time of adoption of ethnic federalism was indicative for a state building strategy based on the recognition and administrative/institutional accommodation of ethnic diversity. It was the only political mechanism that could guarantee societal stability and the continued existence of the Ethiopian state. After him, Ethiopian federalism does have the capacity to effectively balance unity and diversity tendencies. A necessary precondition is that a number of constitutional/legal and political conditions are fulfilled. At that time and even until now there is no other way than ‘the ethnic strategy’ to keep the country together. (Van der Beken, n.d.: 1) Therefore I see the hypothesis that the provisions of a liberal democratic constitution conflict with the reality of authoritarian centralist practice, verified. The future of federalism is not necessarily jeopardized because so far there has not been any better solution for Ethiopian state-building. But it is true that a lot has to be done to hold up democratic principles and the distribution of power from the centralist government to the regional units and therefore to the different ethnic groups.

Another argument against the one that ethnic federalism would lead to a further fragmentation and ethnic tensions is that ethno-regional wars in Ethiopia would not benefit anyone and they would be far too costly, especially nowadays considering that the country faces major challenges of poverty and environmental caused disaster such as the recent famine in 2011.

Ethiopian federalism should not be a priori rejected because the country does have the potential to guarantee unity and stability, through the protection of diversity. This will, however, require political as well as constitutional changes. On the one hand, the contradiction between form and practice should disappear, which means that the ruling party should accept the consequences of the constitutional choices. To be able to achieve

unity in diversity on the other hand, the constitutional framework also needs some changes. Therefore the strong emphasis on separateness (e.g. through the right to territorial autonomy at different levels) should be reduced and countered by the development. (Van der Beken, n.d.: 17)

Regarding the last question about the way, in which Ethiopia can be located and differentiated within the Horn of Africa as a political region of balance of power, it has to be concluded that:

Even though Ethiopia is located within the region of balance of power at the Horn of Africa, with failed or conflicting states (Somalia, Sudan) surrounding it, it remains an efficient multi-ethnic state. Nonetheless Ethiopia is a state with shortcomings in democratic principles and a lack of distribution of power to the federal units. It is true, that Ethiopia has a unique history, a quite uncommon but efficient political system on the African continent, and a relatively economic and military strength in the region. But the country has its own inner-state struggles as well as conflicts in the border regions with its neighbours.

To end this research paper, I want to cite the archbishop Desmond Tutu, saying:

“Let us celebrate diversity”

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²¹ The African Elections Database was launched in 2004. Its purpose is to provide a comprehensive archive of past and present election results for the 48 countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. All data found on the database are obtained from Internet sources, mainly electoral authorities in Sub-Saharan Africa, Local online newspapers, official government documents, electoral observer mission reports, etc. see <http://africanelections.tripod.com/about.html>.

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Graphics

Map 1 (p. 7): Orthographic map of Africa, showing Ethiopia location.

Source: Africa_(orthographic_projection).svg

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ethiopia_\(Africa_orthographic_projection\).svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ethiopia_(Africa_orthographic_projection).svg).

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Map 2 (p. 8): Horn of Africa: [http://articlesofinterest-](http://articlesofinterest-kelley.blogspot.com/2011/07/africa-horn-of-africa-interactive-map.html)

[kelley.blogspot.com/2011/07/africa-horn-of-africa-interactive-map.html](http://articlesofinterest-kelley.blogspot.com/2011/07/africa-horn-of-africa-interactive-map.html). (Access: 13th Jan 2012)

Map 3 (p. 46): Ethnic Map showing the Regional States of Ethiopia

<http://mapsof.net/map/ethiopia-regions-english>. (Access: 15th Oct 2011)

Graphic 1 (p. 44): Counted Population Size of Ethiopia (in millions) 1984 – 2007.

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Graphic 2 (p. 47): Percentage Distribution of Major Ethnic Groups: 2007. Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Consensus (2008: 16).

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Graphic 3 (p. 91): Results of 23 May 2010 House of People's Representatives Election. African Elections Database (2011): Elections in Ethiopia.

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Abstract

Ethiopia as a multi-ethnic state, with more than 80 distinct ethnic groups living on the state territory, is unique on the African continent, regarding that it has never been colonized by the Europeans and introduced a federal Democratic Republic in 1991 based on ethnicity. Given by the Constitution of 1994, each ethnic group has the right to self-determination up to secession. But when measuring the success of federalism and democratic principles in Ethiopia considering the essential requirements of a genuinely federal division of power, it becomes obvious that still a far way is to be gone.

The thesis is structured in basically two main parts. First, there will be a methodological and theoretical part, where I will examine my chosen methodological approach, working in the field of comparative politics, using hermeneutics as the leading concept to work on the used sources and literature and explain the main concepts and theories, which I will later on deal with, and which are fundamental to answer my research questions and hypotheses. Second, I will go into the case study of Ethiopia, whereas I will analyse the history, especially referring to the different political phases and systems (assimilationist policy, secessionist path, ‘accommodationist’ approach) of the country. Moreover, I will carry out the legal background and the cornerstones of Ethiopia’s 1994 Constitution, which are central to understand the political status quo and to answer my research questions:

- How can the current political structure of the Ethiopian state be analysed throughout the history, taking into consideration that Ethiopia has never been colonized by the Europeans?
- Which role does the multi-ethnic federalism that provides for the right to secession in the Ethiopian Constitution, nowadays play?
- How can Ethiopia be located and differentiated in the Horn of Africa as a political region of balance of power?

Additional I explain the major outcomes of Ethiopia’s 2010 election and analyse the country in a region of power balance in the Horn of Africa.

Abstract - Deutsch

Äthiopien ist ein multi-ethnischer Staat, der über 80, voneinander unterschiedliche Ethnien beheimatet. In Afrika erscheint das Land in der Hinsicht einzigartig zu sein, als dass es nie kolonisiert wurde und seit 1991 eine Föderale Demokratische Republik errichtet hat, die auf dem Konzept der Ethnizität basiert. Die neue Verfassung von 1994 gewährt jeder Ethnie das Recht auf Selbstbestimmung bis hin zur Abspaltung von Staatsterritorium. Jedoch gemessen am Erfolg des föderalen Systems und der damit verbundenen demokratischen Prinzipien und der föderalen Machtverteilung, muss Äthiopien noch einen weiten Weg gehen.

Die Arbeit ist grundsätzlich in zwei Teile geteilt. Der erste Teil umfasst die methodologischen und theoretischen Ansätze. Ich arbeite im Feld der vergleichenden Politikwissenschaft und bediene mich der Hermeneutik, um die herangezogenen Quellen zu bearbeiten und Sinn daraus zu gewinnen. Die theoretischen Ausführungen dienen dem Verständnis und der Bearbeitungen meiner Fragestellungen und Hypothesen. In einem zweiten Schritt analysiere ich das Fallbeispiel Äthiopien, wobei ich vor allem auf die Geschichte eingehe, und die unterschiedlichen Phasen an politischen Systemen (Assimilierungspolitik, Sezessionspolitik und der multi-ethnische Ansatz) erläutere. Des Weiteren porträtiere ich die rechtlichen Hintergründe und die Grundsteine der Verfassung von 1994, um dadurch das Verständnis für den politischen Status quo und die Beantwortung meiner Forschungsfragen zu erhöhen, die da wären wie folgt:

- Wie kann das derzeitige politische System in Äthiopien analysiert werden, unter Berücksichtigung der Geschichte und der Tatsache, dass das Land nie kolonisiert wurde?
- Welche Rolle spielt der multi-ethnische Föderalismus, der das Recht auf Selbstbestimmung und Sezession laut Verfassung gewährleistet, heute?
- Wie kann Äthiopien in einer Region der Kräfteverhältnisse am Horn von Afrika positioniert und differenziert werden?

Des Weiteren gibt es einige Ausführungen zur Wahl in Äthiopien 2010 und der Rolle Äthopiens in einer Region, in der verschiedener Machtstrukturen vorzufinden sind.

Lebenslauf

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